



**Statement on the Recent Developments of the Popular Consultations
July 15, 2011**

The Carter Center calls for the National Assembly to approve a formal extension of the popular consultations in Blue Nile, as announced by President Bashir and stipulated in the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, to allow for meaningful substantive hearings and ensure experts have sufficient time to prepare testimony. The extension should include clearly stated timelines to allow for an effective and meaningful process. The Center also calls for the political parties in Blue Nile to refrain from further politicization of the process and to reach an agreement on holding further hearings by the commission or in the Sudan Legislative Assembly for expert testimony and debate on the issues raised by citizens.

The popular consultations in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan were included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to allow citizens of the two states to discuss and inform the state governments as to whether the CPA has met their aspirations and for the state legislatures to renegotiate arrangements with the national government if necessary. Thus the consultations are an important instrument for returning stability to the two northern states, areas that were both greatly impacted by the civil war.

Approximately 73,000 citizens have participated in the 112 citizen hearings held across Blue Nile State since early January 2011. However, the hearings were highly politicized, as noted in the Carter Center's statement of March 21, with the main parties 'coaching' followers to call for either autonomy or federalism without discussion of the meaning of these concepts. Carter Center observers monitored the data entry of the views expressed during the hearings over the past several months.

The commission is commended for conducting the data entry process efficiently and without manipulation. However, the feedback received during the hearings was entered in a highly summarized fashion, further simplifying citizens' views and contributing to an impression that the hearings were essentially a vote on federalism or autonomy. Thus, an essentially qualitative process of soliciting viewpoints may be in danger of being reduced to a quantitative process, but without the normal safeguards or methodology that would be applied to a referendum or opinion poll.

On June 30, the Blue Nile Parliamentary Commission for popular consultations started writing its report, amid disagreement over whether to hold more substantive hearings and debates by the commission or in the Blue Nile State Legislative Assembly (SLA) to address the concerns and issues raised by citizens during the hearings. In Southern Kordofan, the popular consultation process has been delayed indefinitely due to the ongoing fighting. The Carter Center calls for popular consultations to be allowed to proceed in Southern Kordofan when conditions allow, so that the people are not denied their opportunity to state their opinions and participate in the CPA-mandated process. The process in Southern Kordofan can benefit from the achievements and lessons of the Blue Nile popular consultations and the

political parties should refrain from similar politicization of the hearings that prevents more meaningful discussion.

would provide additional time for the Blue Nile Parliamentary Commission to finish its analysis of the data collected and to write a comprehensive report, and, if the CPA is deemed not to have met the aspirations of the constituents, for the SLA to prepare for and engage in negotiations with the Government of Sudan.

Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct that was adopted at the United Nations in 2005 and has been endorsed by 35 election observation groups. The Center assesses the process against the CPA, the Popular Consultation Act of 2010 and other