



"Vision of a Common Ground "



PROPOSAL FOR SECURITY AND STABILITY IN ABYEI

**REPORT OF AVSS/KIC
WORKSHOP**

27 MAY 2022 - 01 JUNE 2022

Cover Note from the Chairperson

In my capacity as the Chairperson of Abyei's Voice for Security and Stability, it gives me great honor and pleasure to share with our leaders, our compatriots inside these country and abroad, and our international partners, and all stakeholders, the report of a month-long workshop, which our organization recently convened, in collaboration with another Abyei group, Keep It Confidential, to discuss the crisis situation in Abyei in search for practical solutions. We were driven by the long suffering of our people and the need to break the impasse over the issue of the final status for the area which has eluded the parties and created a vacuum of state protection for the security and stability for our beleaguered people.

The workshop was convened for our people to search for an arrangement that would be acceptable to the parties and all the concerned stakeholders. The core of the proposal we agreed upon is for the people of Abyei to govern themselves for a specified interim period as an area that would be autonomous, but remain linked to both countries. The stakeholders would agree on security arrangements for the area, with international guarantees.


Institutional arrangements would be put in place to ensure peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the Ngok Dinka and their neighbors in both countries. This must not entail sharing the organs of the Ngok Dinka self-governance, but will require creating an entity to manage bilateral relations between otherwise separate communities, especially during the period of seasonal migration by cattle herders in search of water and grazing in the Abyei area.

After the interim period, during which confidence would have been hopefully built between the parties and among the neighboring communities, the Ngok Dinka would then exercise the right to determine their final status between the two countries.

We believe that this arrangement, the details of which can be negotiated by the parties, offers the only hope for achieving sustainable peace, security and stability for our people, who have suffered too much for far too long. We believe it is a common ground, where there is no winner or loser, and where all the stakeholders are winners.

It is our sincere hope that this report will contribute to the resolution of the deadlock that has been a stumbling block to the determination of the final status of our beloved area of Abyei.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophia', written in a cursive style.

Madam Sophia Albino Deng
Chairperson of AVSS/KIC

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I. Introduction and Background

Since the problem of Abyei is well known, this report of the workshop convened by Abyei's Voice for Security and Stability/Keep It Confidential on the challenges facing the Ngok Dinka will not dwell on the details of events in the tortured history of the area and the adversarial relations of the Ngok with their Missiriya neighbors to the North and the successive governments in Khartoum which has consistently supported them. The report therefore provides a brief historical background, an overview of the crisis, the impasse over the status of Abyei, and the need for a way out of the deadlock.

The core issue is that Abyei is a contested area between North and South of the Sudanese State that has now been divided into the two States of Sudan and South Sudan. The contest goes back to a decision made by the British colonial administration in 1905 that annexed South Sudanese communities, including the Ngok Dinka of Abyei and the neighboring Ruweng and Twic communities to the East and South, to Kordofan Province in the North. The stated objective was to ensure better protection for these communities against slave raiders from the North. Ruweng and Twic were later returned to the South, while the Ngok Dinka of Abyei remained under the administration of Kordofan. The traditional leaders of the Ngok Dinka saw themselves, and were generally viewed by their kindred groups to the South, as gatekeepers to safeguard their interests on North-South borders and ensure good relations between and among the neighboring ethnic communities.

While the British were in control, they maintained an evenhanded management of relations between and among these communities. After independence in 1956, and particularly under the two post-colonial civil wars that characterized North-South relations, 1955-1972 and 1983-2005, freedom fighters from the Ngok Dinka joined the South, fought gallantly alongside their South Sudanese compatriots, and their area became one of the most devastated by the two wars. Successive governments in Khartoum recruited, armed, and deployed Arab militias against their Southern neighbors, with the Ngok Dinka the most exposed.

The agreements that ended the two wars, the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement and the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), gave the people of Abyei the right to decide, by plebiscite and referendum respectively, whether to remain in the North or revert back to the South. Those agreements have never been implemented. President Jaafar Muhammad Nimeiri not only refused to implement the provisions of the Addis Ababa Agreement on Abyei, but eventually abrogated the entire agreement unilaterally. And although President Omer Al- Bashir honored the main provisions of the CPA that culminated in the independence of South Sudan, he ignored and indeed rejected the Abyei Protocol that calls for a referendum that offered the Ngok Dinka the option of returning to the administration of South Sudan. The results of the community referendum, which the Ngok Dinka themselves organized in 2013, with the facilitation of the government of South Sudan, when the people voted near unanimously to join the South, were never recognized, even by the Government of Sudan Sudan that had facilitated the referendum.

As a result of this deadlock, the people of Abyei have continued to suffer the impact of both wars and their ongoing remnants and repercussions. In 2008 and 2011, the Sudanese army, with Arab militia, invaded Abyei, razed the town to the ground, and looted all belongings and parts of the buildings they destroyed. The United Nations Interim Force in Abyei (UNISFA), which was created in the wake of these devastating attacks, is offering a degree of protection that is much appreciated by the people. But it is, as the name indicates, a temporary arrangement that has to be renewed every six months, with considerable concern and threats of termination due to the lack of progress in finding a solution to the crisis. Besides, UNISFA is not covering the entire territory of the Nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms, which was determined by the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) in 2005, was supposed to be final and binding, but was rejected by the Government of the Sudan on the ground that the Commission had exceeded its mandate. The case was then taken to the International Court of Arbitration, which revised the ABC's findings in its 2009 decision. Although that decision was also agreed upon to be final and binding, it has not been implemented on the ground.

That was the context in which a Proposal for the interim security and stability arrangements for Abyei was introduced by Dr. Francis Mading Deng, who presented it to the UN and stakeholders in 2014 when he was the Permanent Representative of the newly independent state of South Sudan.

The Proposal however proved controversial, especially among the Ngok Dinka political elites in Juba, who had participated in the South Sudanese liberation struggle and saw Abyei as South Sudanese.

Although disappointed by the failure of the government of South Sudan to ensure the implementation of the Abyei Protocol of the CPA that provided that the self-determination referendum of Abyei be held simultaneously with that of South Sudan, they still felt optimistic that the government would eventually deliver on the right and desire of the Ngok Dinka to join South Sudan. For them, the Proposal undermined or at least distracted from the determination of the final status that they saw as quite immanent. The Proposal therefore remained dormant for several years.

But the Proposal continued to be debated among the Ngok Dinka. It was supported by the majority of the people from the area, but opposed by a vocal and influential minority in Juba. With the recent attacks from the Southern border by the Twic Dinka, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei now face existential threat from both the North and the South, with no reliable protection nationally and internationally. Although the Government of South Sudan has made Abyei a Special Administrative Area within South Sudan, that arrangement has not been officially recognized by the Sudan or the international community. With the final status of the area still undecided, the people of Abyei are now in a state of virtual statelessness, without the protection and material assistance which a state is normally expected to grant its citizens.

With the persistent and worsening crises in the Abyei area, the initiative was recently reactivated by various Ngok Dinka groups, among them Abyei Community in the United States.

Following discussions Dr. Francis Deng held last year with Diaspora groups in which the Proposal gained considerable support, the Community recently formed Abyei Voice for Security and Stability (AVSS) and Keep It Confidential (KIC) to formally adopt the Proposal. The two entities jointly organized a month-long world-wide online virtual workshop to debate, endorse and promote the Proposal. Representatives from all sectors of the Ngok Dinka communities at home and abroad, intellectuals, tribal leaders, elders, men, women, youth, and members of the Diaspora from literally all regions of the world, participated in the workshop. The workshop lasted for over a month and ended with the unanimous adoption of the Proposal with considerable amendments to make it more acceptable to all the stakeholders. It was also decided that since the Proposal represents the legitimate aspirations, demands and expectations of the Ngok Dinka, it should be now 'owned' by the people and be promoted as amended and not continue to be viewed as Dr. Deng's Proposal.

This report of the month-long AVSS/KIC workshop encapsulates the main themes of the workshop deliberations, the justification for the Proposal, and the core principles of the proposed self-governance for the area to ensure security and stability as prerequisites for the return and resettlement of the displaced persons and refugees and the development and prosperity of the area, not only for the Ngok Dinka, but also for their neighbors to the North and the South.

II. Overview of the Crisis in Abyei.

The irony of the crisis in Abyei is that while the area was severed from South to North Sudan in order to better protect the people from Northern Sudanese Arab slave raiders, affiliation into the administration of the North became a major source of insecurity and instability for the Ngok Dinka. Since the independence of the Sudan from British rule in 1956, North-South relations have been marked by recurrent wars in which Abyei sided with the South and became the most exposed to mass atrocities by the Sudanese armed forces and their allied Missiriya Arab militia. The wars that have raged between the North and South for several decades ended with the South Sudanese overwhelmingly opting to secede from the North through a self-determination referendum. South Sudan became a fully independent sovereign state on July 9; 2011.

It is well known that freedom fighters from Abyei courageously fought in the two wars of South Sudanese liberation struggle. The first war began with the 1955 mutiny by a unit of the Sudan Defense Force in the Southern town of Torit that triggered the Anya-Nya war that lasted until 1972. Hostilities resumed in 1983 under the championship of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army and ended in 2005 with signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The liberation struggle of the people of Abyei in fact started earlier when, in 1953, Abyei students from all over the country submitted a letter to the Sudan Government demanding to be returned to Bahr el Ghazal Province in the South. Their demand was suppressed, which provoked

many to join the ensuing Anya-Nya rebellion in the South. Repression in Abyei also generated a local rebellion in 1982 that contributed to the outbreak of full-scale war in 1983. Despite the valorous role played by the Ngok Dinka in the liberation of South Sudan, Abyei did not get its share of the peace dividends. Far from it, the implementation of the Abyei Protocol, as was the case with the Addis Ababa Agreement, has been blocked by successive Governments in Sudan. As a result of the intransigence of the Sudan to honor the agreements, the people of Abyei have remained in a vacuum of state protection, exposed to all kinds of human rights abuses and persistent atrocities inflicted upon them by the Missiriya Arabs from the Sudan.

During the early stages of the first war, Abyei continued to be an island of peace, though the conflict in the South was encroaching and made peace and security in Abyei quite fragile. As the war intensified, attacks by the Missiriya and the atrocities they committed in the area increased and persisted. Participants in the workshop cited a number of illustrative incidents. Perhaps one of the earliest outstanding incidents was the battle of 1964 when the Arab nomads killed a Dinka man from Ajuong Dinka of Aweil and amputated both arms to beat their drums as they danced. This gross insult and degradation of the dignity of a fellow Dinka provoked the Ngok Dinka to attack the Missiriya Arabs. That year, the Missiriya waged a ferocious attack against the Dinka Ngok, burning villages and killing women, the elderly, and children. The Dinka fought back and eventually repulse the attacks.

The following year, the Missiriya gathered all the Dinka who were in their two major towns, Babanusa and Muglad, and burned them all alive. They killed close to a thousand Dinka men, women and children. That massacre happened under the eyes of the Sudan government police and they did nothing to stop it. And no one was held accountable. That was the first signal to the Ngok Dinka that the government of the Sudan did not recognize them as citizens to be protected against their Arab enemies with whom the government shared racial, ethnic, religious cultural identity.

In 1970, the Abdalla Moyak Deng, who had succeeded his father Deng Majok a year earlier as the Paramount Chief, was assassinated with two of his brothers and three uncles by the security forces in the area. Chief Abdalla had objected to the killing of innocent South Sudanese cattle herders in the area and the seizure of their cattle by the Arab soldiers. Those responsible for the massacre were never held accountable. Over the years, the Arabs continued to stage repeated attacks in a persistent attempt to force the Ngok Dinka out of their own lands.

In 1976, President Jaffar Mohamed Nimeiri, who seized power in 1969, decided to form paramilitary forces to accompany the Arab nomads on their seasonal migrations through the regions of Kordofan and Darfur. The forces were supposedly to prevent clashes between the animal herding nomads and the farmers in those Northern provinces.

Unfortunately, the generals who were known to be behind the idea had a different objective in mind. Being from the Missiriya, they planned to arm their people against the Ngok Dinka and other Southern Sudanese communities bordering the North. The recruits into these paramilitary forces were mostly from the Marahleen (nomadic) militia of Rezaigat and Missiriya Arab groups.

In 1977, the Ajaira section of the Missiriya, which enters Ngok area seasonally in search of water and pastures for their herds, ambushed seven lorries carrying passengers traveling to Abyei from Muglad. They killed nearly a hundred innocent Ngok Dinka men, women, and children. The casualties included a Khartoum University lecturer, Mark Mijak Abiem, a student of history who was on a field research project for his Ph.D thesis for the University of London. Ironically, his research topic was on the history of Ngok Dinka – Missiriya Arab relations.

The Marahleen paramilitary contingent later drove Dinka Ngok out of their villages, depopulating the area as grazing land for the Alajaira Arabs. Although the earlier wars between the Dinka and the Missiriya were fought with spears in which the Dinka had comparative advantage over the Arabs, since they used light spears that could be darted at a distance, compared to the heavy spears of the Arabs that required close proximity, the Arabs began to acquire fire arms, which gave them military superiority. The period between 1977 and 1982 marked the beginning of Missiriya military dominance as they acquired huge supplies of arms from the government. This period also marked the beginning of mass displacement of the Dinka from their lands in Abyei, Aweil and Twic to escape attacks by armed Arab militia.

With the eruption of the second Sudanese civil war in 1983, Sudan Government gave increasing support to the Arab tribes under the umbrella of official government paramilitary forces so that they could participate fully in the war against the rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

The period from 1983 to 1995 marked another change in the relations between the Arab and Dinka tribes the assassination took place. The Arabs began to engage in the abduction of Dinka children, which signified a return to the days of Arab slave raids. Mass killings of civilians, burning of villages and public facilities, and the total destruction of many areas in Ngok Dinka territory became a recurrent tragedy.

On their return from their dry season migration into Ngok Dinka territory in search of water and pastures, back to their home areas during the rainy season to cultivate their farms, the Missiriya would attack innocent civilians, killing, looting, raping women and abducting children. One of the most devastating events in Ngok Dinka – Missiriya Arab relations was the assassination of the Paramount Chief, Kuol (Adol) Deng Kuol, on 4 May, 2013 by Missiriya Arab militants. The assassination took place in the presence of the Commander of the UN Interim Force in Abyei, UNISFA. To this day, the report of the special committee established to investigate the incident has not been released. And no one has been held accountable for the crime. That unresolved feud remains a serious obstacle in promoting peace and reconciliation between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya Arabs. This issue must be urgently addressed one of the challenges UNISFA will continue to face in providing effective and comprehensive protection for the area.

Although the crisis situation of Abyei dates back to the time before the separation of South Sudan, it is alleged that the number of victims of war in the area has fact increased since the CPA and the secession of South Sudan. Khartoum continues to claim Abyei as part of Sudan while it treats the Ngok Dinka as hostile aliens. The Ngok Dinka of Abyei are of course South Sudanese.

And so is their land. But this need not be a reason for animosity. Abyei is now the only area of South Sudan which is paying a heavy price for the secession of South Sudan. This contrasts sharply with the bridging role Abyei has played and was envisaged by the Abyei Protocol to continent of play between North and South Sudan now the two Sudans.

It is now reported that UNISFA is assisting the Missiriya in training police forces within Abyei territory in the utmost northerly territory of the Ngok Dinka. That was the area in which the Missiriya assassinated Paramount Chief Kuol Adol Deng. The Missiriya are increasingly encroaching and settling in Ngok Dinka lands, and UNISFA is allegedly facilitating their settlement. So, UNISFA has been associated with two tragedies caused by the Missiriya, the assassination of the Paramount Chief, and the occupation of Ngok Dinka land.

An area of great concern for the Ngok Dinka which the participants in the workshop highlighted is the increasing Missiriya encroachment into Ngok Dinka territory as settlers. It is being alleged that UNISFA is well aware of this and in fact. Associated with this development is the intensified attacks that happened in the Abyei box from Nov. 2021 to May 2022 and are still continuing without effective preventive or punitive intervention from the national governments and the UN Force.

This de facto Missiriya settlement is in fact confronting the UN agencies and humanitarian organizations with a dilemma. They want to be even handed in offering services and development assistance to both communities within the Abyei box. But this has the direct effect of encouraging and supporting the settlement of the Missiriya, not just as individuals, but as a community. The Ngok Dinka fully support giving the Missiriya humanitarian assistance in their own home area. They also accept sharing with them services during their seasonal migration in Ngok Dinka territory. But any assistance that supports their settlement in Ngok Dinka territory is sowing the seeds of resentment and conflict.

This also raises the issue of undemarcated borders. While the territory of the Nine Chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka has been well defined and the principle of soft borders is agreed by both governments, there is need to physically mark the borders. That was in fact initiated shortly after the Hague Arbitration decision, but President Omer a-Bashir stopped the process of demarcating the borders. This has to be done to resolve the ambiguities of UN demarcated borders which engender potential conflicts.

These are the conditions that prompted the Ngok Dinka to support the Proposal of Dr. Francis Mading Deng for a temporary administrative arrangement that would ensure security and stability in the area. The workshop fully endorsed the Proposal as the only hope for saving the region from the horrors of wars and destruction that have been the plight of the people for decades.

The recently created Abyei Voice for Security and Stability, in partnership with the wider, more inclusive group, Keep It Confidential, have emerged as the voice of the Ngok people to promote the Proposal for the interim stabilization of Abyei area of the Nine Chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka.

III. Consultations and Workshop Deliberations

In 2017, Dr. Francis Mading Deng presented the Proposal to the Ngok Dinka public, the Area Administration, and the traditional leaders in Abyei and it was enthusiastically received. But the controversy lingered on, especially among the leading members of the SPLM in Juba. Dr. Francis also shared the Proposal with the leaders of South Sudan and Sudan, and they were receptive, although no formal endorsement was publically announced. He also discussed the proposal with Missiriya leaders in Khartoum and secured their support in principle. He even signed a joint statement, which endorsed the Proposal, with General Mahdi Babo Nimir, former Chief of Staff of the Sudanese Army and the eldest son of the late Paramount Chief of the Missiriya, Babo Nimir.

Over the years, Dr. Francis Mading continued to present the Proposal for consideration in widely ranging circles of the Ngok Dinka community, tribal leaders, men, women, youth, students and professionals. The Proposal continued to receive mixed reactions, supported by the overwhelming majority of the people and opposed by a vocal and powerful minority in the SPLM leadership.

During this period, Francis Mading continued to engage the leadership of both countries, Sudan and South Sudan, and received support, although nothing was made public. He also maintained consultations with representatives of the African Union, IGAD, UN and the Troika in Juba, Addis Ababa and New York. Francis Mading also periodically briefed European Union Ambassadors in Juba. In all these circles, he received encouraging responses to the Proposal as a promising and persuasive common ground.

In 2021, while he was on a mission to the United States, Dr. Francis Mading held extensive discussions with the Diaspora communities in North America that extended to communities from around the world, including Australia, Europe, Egypt, Sudan and other neighboring countries, and received enthusiastic support. By early 2022, members of the Diaspora decided to formally initiate an all-inclusive debate of the Proposal. By then, it had become quite obvious that the Proposal of the AUHIP of former President Mbeki, though popularly welcomed by the Ngok Dinka, had reached a deadlock, which the Parties did not seem inclined to break. The conflict over Abyei appeared to evade resolution. President Mbeki realized that whichever of the two countries would win the choice of the people of Abyei in a referendum, the other would be the loser. He therefore concluded that if the crisis of Abyei were to be resolved, it was necessary to explore an arrangement that would be acceptable to both countries and the concerned neighboring communities.

The Abyei Community decided to form a committee to promote the adoption and promotion of the Proposal. The committee was given the name of Abyei Voice for Security and Stability (AVSS). Committee members selected as their Chairperson a woman activist, Madam Sophia Deng, a lawyer, Ustaz Lal Nyuon, as her deputy, and a medical doctor, Dr. Tor D. Ngor as it's Secretary General. Other members of the Executive Office were assigned specific functions relating to finance and external outreach. To broaden the scope of the dialogue, AVSS decided to invite a more inclusive group known as Keep It Confidential (KIC) as a partner in the discussion and promotion of the proposal. The circle of participation continued to broaden in its scope of representation at home and abroad. The managers were very committed to the inclusivity and credibility of the process. The dialogue became truly inclusive of the Ngok Dinka from almost all sectors of the Ngok Community, eventually reaching about two hundred participants. Although women were represented by only 25 percent from AVSS and 15 percent from KIC, they played a very prominent role in the discussions.

IV. Elements of the Proposal

The main elements of the initial Proposal which has been revised and elaborated over the years comprise the following ten objectives:

1. Ensuring peace, security and the rule of law, reinforced and strengthened by building on the local capacity of the people for sustainable self-defense and law enforcement, in complementary partnership with the UN Interim Force in Abyei, UNISFA, to cover the territory of the Nine Chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka as demarcated by the Abyei Boundaries Commission of the Abyei Protocol of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and revised by The Hague Arbitration ruling of 2009;

2. Recognizing the Ngok Dinka to govern themselves as a State within their internationally defined territory, whose people are entitled to dual citizenship in the Sudan and South Sudan during the interim period, as stipulated in the Abyei Protocol which, if mutually honored in earnest, should help build mutual trust and confidence and gain the cooperation of the two countries in determining the final status of Abyei in accordance with the aspirations of the people;

3. Encouraging and supporting refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their areas of origin, from which they have been massively displaced by decades of warfare, and providing them with social services in the areas of health, education, and essential commodities normally available only in towns to support and sustain their livelihood in their rural areas, out of the urban centers, where they now live under degrading conditions of urban poverty and humiliation;

4. Generating programs for resilience, recovery, reconstruction and socio-economic development for the returnees and resident communities, including projects for youth employment and women empowerment, and availing them with tools for farming and technical support for generating projects for sustainable socio-economic development, using local natural and human resources in a strategic approach to development as a process of self-enhancement from within;

5. Creating a Community Trust to receive the 2 percent of the oil revenue produced in the area, to which the community is entitled by the Abyei Protocol of the CPA, to be distinguished from the 2 percent to which the Administration is entitled under the Abyei Protocol, or the resources availed to the Area under Article (3.3) of the Protocol, which calls for the establishment “under the Executive Council’ of ‘Abyei Resettlement, Construction and Development Fund”;

6. Promoting peaceful coexistence and cooperation with neighbors in Sudan and South Sudan to guarantee their seasonal migration into Abyei Rising from the Ashes the Abyei area in search of pastures and sources of water for their herds, and sharing humanitarian, social, and development services available in the area during their seasonal migration;

7. Ensuring the genuine support of the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan for this interim arrangement, building on the historical role of Abyei as a meeting ground for cross cultural exchange and mutual enrichment, with guarantees from the pertinent regional and international organizations and key partners and stakeholders, notably Inter-Governmental Authority for Development, the African Union, the United Nations and the Troika countries of the United States, United Kingdom and Norway;

8. Recognizing the right of the Ngok Dinka to determine their final status, which is enshrined in all the peace agreements over the decades, culminating in the CPA, the exercise of that right to be honored, and the outcome recognized and implemented in a congenial and cooperative climate of mutual trust and confidence between the two countries, whether this will mean endorsing the results of the 2013 community referendum, conducting a new referendum, or by a mutually agreed executive decision; and

9. Toward that end, encouraging the people of Abyei Area, led by their Area Administration, and all other actors committed to the justice of the cause of the people of Abyei and the imperative of honoring their aspirations for self-determination, to relentlessly continue to exert pressure on the pertinent decision makers, towards the settlement of the final status of the Abyei Area.

The Dialogue decided to condense these points and group them into five main clusters:

1. Security;
2. Self-governance;
3. Services and Development;
4. Voluntary Return and Resettlement; and
5. Outreach and Advocacy.

The discussions were conducted on these five themes. The group was then broken up into five committees to elaborate on these themes for the purpose of operational programming. Another committee was formed to draft a brief report that could be immediately shared with international intermediaries and the stakeholders. This report is the result of their work.

V. Security

Security was by far the leading concern most emphatically articulated by the Ngok Dinka participants in the workshop. The core of their concern was that they were not only facing violent attacks from their neighbors from both the North and the South, but that the two governments that claimed their area not only failed to protect them, but were suspected of instigating and supporting the attackers.

This problem was compounded by the fact that Abyei is supposed to be weapons free, but the attackers came armed and out of the effective control of the UN forces, while the Ngok Dinka were more exposed to the UN forces, and therefore more controllable and were prevented from carrying arms with which to protect themselves. The end result is that most of the area that is internationally demarcated as the territory of the Nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms remains unprotected and has been evacuated by mass exodus of the inhabitants fleeing from the sustained attacks by the Missiriya Arabs.

Despite this constraint, Ngok youth were rising up with surprisingly high motivation and determination to fighting back in self-defense. Amidst the escalating violence, UNISFA was obviously faced with a dilemma of not being able to provide effective protection for the Ngok Dinka, while their mandate required them to disarm them, even though their attackers were for the most part beyond the control of the UN forces. That dilemma still prevails.

Although the situation makes it imperative for UNISFA to turn a blind eye to Abyei youth arming themselves for self-defense, and they are rising to that challenge, this ambiguous situation is untenable. The Ngok Dinka therefore feel that two lines of action are urgently needed. First, the area needs to be unambiguously placed under the protection of the United Nations. Second, the people of Abyei should be allowed to govern themselves and develop their own capacity for self-defense by creating an armed community protection force, to be recruited, trained, and equipped with the support of the international community.

The outbreak of hostilities with the Twic Dinka exposed the Ngok Dinka of Abyei to what appeared to be a coordinated plan by their neighbors to the North and the South to eradicate the Ngok from their area. The intensification of the attacks posed what the Ngok feared amounted to a credible threat of genocide that UNISFA did not seem adequately equipped to prevent. That paradoxically motivated the people to rise up and unify their front to face up to the challenge of defending their area. Ngok People felt strongly that they could no longer count on either of the two governments for protection. They must rely on themselves to defend their area and look to the United Nations for added protection in a more reliable way and for a more sustainable period than the current short-term interim arrangements.

Participants in the Workshop expressed great concern about the encroachment of Missiriya within their land as determined by the Hague arbitration. Repeated calls by UN Security Council for age so-called oil police to withdraw from have gone unheeded by the Government of Sudan. Missiriya Arab settlers occupy their dwellings during their seasonal migration into then engage displaced people from the South Sudan, mostly Twic and Rek, as laborers and to temporarily occupy those dwellings during the rainy season when the Arabs go back to their lands in the North to cultivate so that they claim normal residence in the area. Reclaiming the land from these illegal occupants is a high priority.

The Ngok Dinka also raised their voice calling for the urgent need for a final solution to their present crisis and out of what they fear is impending genocide. The period they spent discussing the project was marked by a passionate determination to defend themselves while seeking an urgent way out of their tragic predicament. Feeling neglected, abandoned, and targeted by hostile forces from both directions, their only hope was to look to the international community for redemption.

They however realized that no effective and sustainable solution was possible that was not acceptable to the governments of the two countries and their ethnic communities on the ground. The role of the international community was therefore to find a way of persuading them to accept a solution that would address the vital interests of all concerned. This is the core of the appeal behind this report.

VI. Self-Governance

The Ngok Dinka believe that since the Sudan is resistant to the their self-determination referendum, which everyone knows will lead to the Ngok opting to join South Sudan, and the government of South Sudan is reluctant to confront the Sudan over the cause of the people of the area, the only viable solution that may offer a common ground is to make Abyei a self-governing state that will remain connected to both countries through arrangements that can be agreed upon. In a way, this would merely enhance the arrangement that is already in the Abyei Protocol, which provides that the inhabitants of Abyei will be dual citizens of Sudan and South Sudan. It is also in line with the win-win arrangement proposed by President Mbeki that Abyei remains a border state connected to both countries, whichever one of the two the people decide to join in a referendum.

Some participants in the workshop called for the full independence of Abyei, but it was widely recognized that the two countries, Sudan and South Sudan, and the international community, would not accept that. Self-governance was considered to be a more realistic option. The details of the self-governance institutions were discussed in broad terms and were left to be elaborated by the specialized committee assigned the responsibility to develop the Proposal into an operational program.

What the Ngok Dinka cannot accept is the suggestion that while the Missiriya fully govern themselves without Ngok Dinka involvement in their internal affairs and they should participate in the institutions of Ngok Dinka self-governing administration. There is no example anywhere in Sudan and South Sudan, or indeed anywhere else in the world, where a community governs itself and expects to share in the administration of another community. What is plausible is that the Ngok Dinka govern themselves, the Missiriya govern themselves, and the two communities agree on some institutional arrangements for managing their inter-communal relations. The workshop agreed that the interests of the Missiriya should, of course, be fully protected during their seasonal migration into Abyei area in search of water and grazings. They should also be entitled to share the social services available in the area during their seasonal migration. In addition, any individual members of the Missiriya desiring to settle in Abyei area should be allowed to do so. What is not acceptable is for the Missiriya to move in and settle in Abyei in large numbers as a group, occupying areas that are clearly demarcated as Ngok Dinka territory.

In this connection, participants in the workshop were outraged by the increasing encroachment of Missiriya settlers within Abyei box. This is an extension of the presence of so-called oil police around the Difra oil fields within Ngok Dinka territory. Although the UN Security Council resolutions have repeatedly called upon the Government of Sudan to withdraw its forces from the area, Sudan has ignored those calls and has in fact encouraged the Missiriya to settle in the surrounding areas.

Their objective is to change the demography of the Ngok Dinka area. Another group of the Missiriya are settling around Amiet market deep into Ngok Dinka territory. Some of those people move in during the dry season and go back to their regular areas to cultivate during the rainy season. They are however beginning to establish permanent residency by engaging local residents to temporarily occupy their dwellings during their rainy season absence to sustain their claims for regular residency. These are manipulations that complicate the situation and need to be carefully regulated and managed.

VII. Social Services and Development

Since Abyei is now in a vacuum of state responsibility, the provision of whatever social services and development activities are currently available in the area mostly come from international organizations. The government of South Sudan is of course supporting the Special Area Administration by paying salaries and rendering some basic services in the areas of education and health. Although Abyei population has mostly migrated from the area to urban centers in both Sudan and South Sudan because of insecurity, there is a strong belief among the people that if security and stability in the area were normalized and guaranteed, the area has sufficient human and material resources to provide services and generate a self-sustaining program for development.

Generally speaking, participants in the workshop were optimistic about the prospects for self governance, development and long-term prosperity in Abyei area. The area is well suited for agriculture, has vast arable land and reliable rainfall, and is also well suited for the rearing of livestock. It has a moderate ecology that does not suffer from the dry season draught of the North or the rainy season flood conditions in the South. This is why it attracts seasonal migration of herders from the North and the South. The area is also endowed with fruit producing trees, and the tree that produces the misnamed gum Arabic. There is also a plentiful array of wild life and varieties of colorful birds that could be an attraction to tourism, if appropriate infrastructure is developed. There is also the potential of unexplored mineral wealth and the oil resources that are already being exploited and which has given Abyei the description of the 'oil rich area'. This is an extracted wealth from which the population so far receives no share of the revenue generated. Although the Community is entitled by the Abyei Protocol to 2 percent and the Abyei Administration to another 2 percent, none of these entitlements has been paid.

The aim of the development planned for the area is to be largely self-reliant, building on indigenous institutions and cultural values. This should make effective use of human resources with the traditionally assigned roles for different categories of the community: elders, youth, women and warrior age-sets. Traditionally, the age set system was not only for self-defense, but also a means for regulating and controlling social behavior among young men and women. Members of the age-set were socialized, controlled and regulated, to observe the moral code of conduct that prevented and severely punished such offenses as rape and theft. Warrior age-sets were required to strictly respect the principles of war ethics. Women and children must not be involved in fighting or be hurt in any way related to the hostilities.

A fallen warrior shielded by a woman for protection must no longer be harmed. Ambushing an enemy outside the battle field was forbidden. Men fought face to face. These principles may now be outmoded, but the moral values involved still hold. Such practices as the recruitment of child soldiers, rapes and theft, are gross violations of the Dinka moral code of conduct which the community intends to bring to an end.

The development plan for the Ngok Dinka as a self-governing community will of course require vast resources which are currently unavailable. The community hopes to generate the needed resources from the arrears of their entitlements from the revenues of the oil produced in the area, which the workshop argued should be considerably increased. The community also hopes to attract investors from the region and internationally, especially in the areas of agriculture and livestock development. Overall, the participants in the workshop were optimistic about turning Abyei into a self-governing region of peace, security, stability, development and prosperity, from which all the communities in the region stand to benefit.

VIII. Voluntary Return and Resettlement

Since most of the northern territories of Abyei have been evacuated because of insecurity, participants in the workshop considered voluntary return in safety and dignity a high priority. But return was is not practical under the prevailing conditions of insecurity. It was pointed out that the Ngok Dinka had massively returned from the North on previous occasions, only to be forced to flee again and have most of their belongings destroyed or looted. The only conditions under which voluntary return will be possible is if security is assured. Short of a comprehensive peace in the area, ensuring security remains an elusive though popular aspiration.

Since most of the northern t Participants in the workshop were of the opinion that for voluntary return to possible under the current conditions of insecurity, UNISFA should be empowered and well equipped to accompany the returnees to their areas of origin and provide them with protection in their settlements. It was also suggested that UNISFA be assisted by reorganized, trained and equipped warrior age-sets. The function of these warriors should be strictly defensive. After all, the guiding principles of the UN force in the area and the Ngok Dinka war ethics prevent the warriors from aggression. But they should be allowed to defend themselves and their people against aggression. One way to guard against the violations of these principles is to have UNISFA officers accompany these warriors to ensure conformity to the moral code of conduct.

Since the returnee families will be in dire need of humanitarian support, there will be need to call on humanitarian agencies, and national and international organizations, governmental and nongovernmental, to respond to these genuine community needs in the return and resettlement process, especially during the first week based on field assessments.

The workshop strongly recommended that support upon the arrival of the returnees be focused on the following needs:

1. Food security and livelihoods (FSL): food rations, seeds and tools, and any other support deemed necessary in preparation for the cultivation season;
2. Water sanitation and hygiene (WASH): repair and rehabilitation of the existing water facilities, provision of water containers for fetching and storing water, and personal hygiene materials, with due consideration of female needs;

3. Non-food items (NFIs): shelter materials and tools that would help communities construct their own houses;

4. Health and nutrition: children, older people and pregnant women would require urgent health and medical support through mobile clinic or nearby public health units; and

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5. Education, protection and other sectors: children education and protection needs will also require timely consideration and appropriate intervention.

Finally, the workshop participants expressed confidence that the needed team of volunteers in the Abyei Area generally and the concerned villages in particular will be readily available at the appropriate time to liaise with any partners in support for the returnees.

IX. Outreach and Advocacy

While what is intended in this cluster is external relations, the workshop did not want to imply that they were envisioning an independent state of Abyei. What is envisaged and is urgently needed is a process that requires engaging and winning the cooperation of the two governments and the neighboring communities, with the AU, UN, the Troika and other actors that could play an intermediary role in resolving the crises in the area

Although the workshop realized that the Proposal constitutes a compromise for building consensus and cooperation, it was also expected that it might meet with resistance from both sides, each of which has its own ambition over the area. There are also individuals from the Ngok Dinka Community for whom the only viable option for Abyei is to be unambiguously and unequivocally part and parcel of South Sudan. However, participants in the workshop were of the opinion that even if that objective was the favored option for most Ngok Dinka people, it has so far proved elusive and difficult to achieve. Besides, recent attacks from both the North and the South have developed among the Ngok Dinka increasing inclination toward self-administration distinct from, though somewhat still connected to, the two countries, with international safeguards.

Participants in the workshop recognized that the practical realization of the proposed arrangement will depend on the acceptance of the Governments of the two countries and the support of the international community. Besides, the Proposal builds on the agreements already concluded by the two governments with international guarantees, whose implementation also depends on the political will of those principals. Direct contact and engagement with the two governments and key international stakeholders is therefore critical to the success of the proposed arrangements. That is why the Outreach and Advocacy action program was one of the five clusters on the workshop agenda. This essentially focused on seeking wide support for the Proposal nationally, regionally and internationally. The workshop formed a committee with that as its assignment.

The specific objectives of Outreach and Advocacy action plan will include the following tasks:

1. Explain the reasons that prompted the Ngok Dinka of Abyei to propose temporary arrangements for ensuring security and stability in the area, which is attributed to the failure of the two governments and the concerned parties in the region and in the international community to decisively agree on a final solution for the Abyei region;
2. Reassure the political parties in the Sudan and South Sudan that the proposed arrangements for the security, stability and development of Abyei as a self-governing area between the two states does not in any way contradict or undermine the agreements and protocols signed on Abyei, including those related to the final status that will be determined by the democratic choice of the people of Abyei through a referendum on the future of the area;

3. Reaffirm specifically that the Ngok Dinka remain committed and will adhere to the 2004 Abyei Protocol that is an integral part and parcel of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement;

4. Reassure the relevant stakeholders that these interim arrangements do not in any way revoke the sovereignty of the two states of Sudan and South Sudan over the region, and that the residents of Abyei will be dual citizens of the two states and their flags will be hoisted on the public offices of the region during that interim period; and

5. Clarify the position of the Ngok Dinka that the Proposal is a practical search for a common ground where there is no winner and no loser, and guarantees the interests of all concerned parties and stakeholders, which should persuade all the concerned parties to support the Proposal.

To pursue these Outreach and Advocacy objectives, , the workshop created a five persons committee to contact the Sudanese and South Sudanese government leaders and key members of the international community as well as representatives of the neighboring communities to explore a common ground for accepting and implementing the Proposal to restore security, stability and development in the Abyei region, including the surrounding areas to the South and North. The committee will a be comprised of people with diplomatic and persuasive skills to dialogue constructively and fruitfully.

The outreach and advocacy intended under this cluster is to persuade the stakeholders, including the two governments and the neighboring communities, that the framework proposed for the Ngok Dinka is in effect a win-win common ground that is in the mutual interest of all concerned.

X. Debate on the Principles of the Proposal

On July 28, 2022, as the workshop was concluding its work and finalizing its report, a group in Juba that identified itself identified as Abyei Interim Leadership Council, came out with a statement against the Proposal of Dr. Francis Mading Deng. Although unsigned, the statement makes familiar points against the Proposal which should be seriously considered.

After objectively and accurately stating the key elements and arguments of the Proposal, they make their own case with what appears to be an ambiguous position. First, they acknowledge that because “progress to the Final Status of Abyei Area is stalled, any attempt that brings the matter back to the table again should be much appreciated and welcomed, as such initiatives could remind the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to seriously re-think how to overcome the impasse on this matter.”

They argue that “any such initiative (should) be thoroughly evaluated” and that “it is of common interest that such submission should be publicly shared, consultatively debated, and transparently discussed by all the institutions of the Ngok of Abyei people, both state institutions and civil society organizations, to spearhead the consultative process on the matter to ensure the consensus since the matter relates to political fate and destiny of our entire people of the Ngok Dinka”.

The statement spotlights “the historical role that Ngok Dinka had effectively and efficiently played in both struggles of 1955 and 1983, respectively, to have the Abyei Area returned to South Sudan where it belongs culturally, socially, and originally”. It also notes “the fact that we have made significant gains, despite the remaining issue of the ‘Final Status”, which we should

determinedly work to accomplish without retreat or defeat, as it has been the main aim of our historical struggle”. The Council draws attention to “the result of our Communal Referendum, which was transparently and fairly conducted in 2013, and in which our people had overwhelmingly voted to join South Sudan, confirming and cementing their unwavering will to return to South Sudan where they were carved out in 1905”.

Up to this point, there is no difference between the points made by the statement and those that featured in the AVSS/KIC workshop. The statement however stresses the one-sided decisions and actions of the Government of South Sudan without acknowledging the controversy surrounding them regionally and internationally. The relevant preambular paragraph states: “Considering the remarkable Articles 2 (b) and 97 (4) of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011 as amended, which clearly stated that the Abyei Area as defined by the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal Award of July 2009 is part and parcel of the territory of the Republic of South Sudan and its people shall have an inalienable right to enjoy South Sudanese citizenship and nationality and all rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution the step which we all believe that it is an advanced constitutional development on the issue of Abyei that should be capitalized and built on rather than to rehash”. The action taken by South Sudan is of course in conformity with the dual citizenship for the people of Abyei during the interim period, but is not recognized as a determination of the final status of the area which remains contested.

The statement then proceeds with their core arguments against the Proposal “based on the principles above” by stating that they “Reject the central idea in the Proposal of Dr. Francis, which calls to ‘make Abyei of the Ngok Dinka fully self-governing state, with all the branches government ...’. They however do not acknowledge the fact that self-administration is essentially provided for in the Abyei Proposal and is also recommended by the High Level Implementation Panel of the African Union chaired by President Mbeki which the Council and indeed the Ngok Dinka generally strongly support. Ironically, in their operative paragraph 3, they state that “the current Abyei Special Administrative Area itself, in our view, is full self government by its mandate and should be maintained as it is or improved on under the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011 as amended and the Establishment Order for the Establishment of Abyei Special Administrative Order 2015”.

Obviously, there is no disagreement on this other than the fact that it is unilateral action that is not recognized by Khartoum and the international community.

To complicate the situation, the government of the Sudan not only demands that the Missiriya share the administration of the area, but has recently established a parallel administration for the area. Although its physical location, anomalously called Abyei, remains vague and unspecified, Sudan has announced plans to build structures and infrastructure for the administration in the northern region of Abyei, where the Missiriya are being settled. This is clearly an ominous arrangement that has the potential of the Sudan occupying portions of Ngok territory and partitioning Ngokland. A clearly defined and mutually agreed arrangement along the lines suggested in the Proposal is needed for the entire territory of the Nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms to remain United under one administration.

The same can be said about the security arrangements recommended in the Proposal. The statement argues that “the current Abyei Community Police should be strengthened and equipped to ensure law and order in the Area and guard against any criminal activities in the Area”. The Proposal also shares this view, although the devil is in the details as Khartoum, with sympathetic ears from some circles in the international community, calls for the police and other administrative arrangements in Abyei to be shared with the Missiriya. Furthermore, the statement argues that “effective security for the Ngok Dinka, within their recognized boundaries, demarcated by the Hague Arbitration Award (Abyei Box), should continue to be left to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) as this is the core mandate of UNISFA”. Obviously, this is also the position of the Proposal, with the proviso that UNISFA is only a temporary security force and that a more sustainable arrangement is needed, which would not necessarily exclude UNISFA.

An area of misunderstanding or misreading of the Proposal is that reference to any other security arrangements alluded to in the Proposal is misconstrued as calling for sharing the administration of Abyei with the Missiriya or the Government of the Sudan. The statement categorically argues,

“We must resist any new security arrangement attempts that may return us back to joint institutions which have been superseded by major developments, including the Establishment Order for Abyei Special Administrative Area 2015. Accordingly, we should continue to advocate for the strengthening of UNISFA to protect our people and to extent its control to all areas within the Abyei Box”. The Proposal has persistently endorsed the role of UNISFA and any alternative forms of international protection and has emphatically and repeatedly argued against any arrangements that would imply sharing with the Missiriya or return to the administration of Sudan.

On this issue, there is some ambiguity regarding dual citizenship which is provided for in the Abyei Proposal and the AUHIP proposal endorses is supported by the Proposal, but is rejected by the Council which states that “citizenship and traveling documents for Abyei residents were already granted to Abyei residents as per the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011 as amended as South Sudanese citizens. There is no reason for claiming the same documents from the Republic of Sudan, which decided to abandon the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and its residents because the government of Sudan knows”. Quite apart from the fact that the Council is presenting a one-sided position in a contested situation, it is somewhat perplexing that the people of Abyei should be denied what is in effect an added travel facilitation.

A related area where there is significant difference, but arguably a source of enrichment for the Ngok Dinka, is the Proposal’s consideration of a third option for the status of the Ngok Dinka, which the Council’s statement opposes. The Council states, “This option is rejected because it is unsafe and it reflects a political opinion that contradicts the goal of our widely-recognized historical struggle. Secondly, it has never been provided for in the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Thirdly, it has also not been an option put forward for consideration by the Ngok of Abyei people or the SPLM, whom we mandated to resolve the final status of the Abyei Area on our behalf in 2003. Therefore, the option lacks legality and legitimacy, contradicts Abyei Communal Referendum’s result and our legal status as South Sudanese citizens”. It is worth noting that since the CPA was concluded, agreements, such as resort to the arbitration of the International Court of Arbitration and Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, which were not provided for in the Abyei Protocol, have been negotiated and agreed.

What is legal other than what the parties agree? What the Proposal presents are ideas and options for the Parties to negotiate and agree upon. And if they agree, that obviously becomes legal. So, there is no basis for disagreement on the ground of legality.

The Council argues that “there is an urgent need for the Ngok Dinka to conduct a general conference to map out and agree on strategic priorities of the Area instead of discussing these significant issues in a manner that ultimately invites political rift among our people”. The proposal for a conference to discuss all the controversial issues in the administration of the area has been under consideration in recent years. It was also thoroughly discussed by the workshop. The idea of the conference was widely endorsed, but it was agreed that under the current circumstances of insecurity and shifting priorities, focus should be placed on establishing and consolidating the security and stability of the area so that the conference can be held under more conducive conditions.

Finally, the Council argues that “the Proposal should not be taken to any regional or international bodies, as planned by its proponents. If there is any need to be considered, it must first be subjected to comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders that will include the Abyei Special Administrative Area, Abyei File, Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, Abyei representatives in the Transitional National legislature, Traditional Authority Leaders, Abyei Civil Society organizations, and any other stakeholder to have their say on this serious political decisions. To this very end, the Council reserves its right to engage and dialogue with the people of Abyei in Diaspora to reach common ground or understanding on the matter to minimize division and rift among our people at this critical juncture the history of the Area”.

On this issue, as the report of the workshop thoroughly explains, extensive consultations and discussions on the Proposal have been conducted over the last decade and the workshop was an inclusive forum for deliberations and collective decision making. As for the involvement of regional and international stakeholders, gathering information from all the circles concerned from the two countries and abroad is a central feature of their mediation. Withholding access to information cannot be in the best interest of the people of Abyei who have suffered for far too long and want their voices to be heard by all concerned and in particular by international mediators and decision makers committed to the promotion and protection of universal principles of Justice and human dignity.

It should be obvious from this brief response to the statement of the self-identified Interim Leadership Council that the issues they raise have been thoroughly discussed by the AVSS/KIC workshop. Despite some significant differences on a few issues, there is considerable agreement on the fundamental crisis facing the Ngok Dinka, the issue of the final status being the most important concern of all the Ngok Dinka on which there is a well recognized impasse. As the Council acknowledges, what the Proposal is trying to do is to break the impasse and pave the way toward the peace final resolution of the Abyei crisis and end the suffering of the Ngok Dinka People.

XI. Conclusion

Although it has been obvious for the last several years that the Proposal, first introduced by Dr. Francis Mading Deng in 2014, was welcomed by the majority of the Ngok Dinka at home and in the Diaspora, it was also known to be opposed by influential individuals of Ngok leadership close to the center of power in Juba. These individuals considered Abyei as unequivocally part of South Sudan for which they and many other members of the Ngok Dinka fought and sacrificed a great deal to liberate.

These individuals are highly respected leaders, whose contribution to Abyei and South Sudan is held in high regard. However, with the Sudan blocking the self determination for the Ngok Dinka to decide whether to remain in Sudan or join South Sudan and with the government of South Sudan avoiding any action that might antagonize Sudan, support for the Proposal increased overwhelmingly among the Ngok Dinka to the point of near consensus. Accordingly, the workshop concluded that unless these individual leaders can change the official policy and attitude of the government of South Sudan, their position is clearly untenable.

With the recent attacks by the Twic youth, instigated and supported by leading politicians and administrators from the Twic, including elements in the government of South Sudan, in what seemed to be a coordinated plan with members of the Missiriya and the Sudan government, the Ngok Dinka are feeling abandoned and squeezed between hostile forces. In addition to preparing themselves for self-defense, they have become persuaded that they need to rely on themselves and hope for international protection, until the conflict over their status is finally resolved. The Proposal for the Interim Security and Stability has therefore become their rallying point.

Although feelings were very high in the workshop, and some people among the Ngok Dinka began to call for the full independence of the area, the overwhelming view was that the Ngok Dinka should aim at an arrangement that is acceptable to the two governments of Sudan and South Sudan and their respective local communities, and be guaranteed by the international community. If the two governments are able to immediately agree on a final status for Abyei, then that would be the best way out of the crisis. If not, the highest priority for the Ngok Dinka now is:

- To have their security guaranteed;
- to allow them to govern themselves without interference from both countries or ethnic neighbors;
- to provide the rural population with essential services and development opportunities;
- to facilitate the voluntary return and resettlement of the internally displaced populations and refugees in safety and dignity to the areas from which they have been forced to flee; and
- to promote peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the Ngok Dinka and their neighbors to the North and South and to have the two countries, Sudan and South Sudan, in partnership with the international community guarantee the peace, security, stability and development of the area.

It must be emphasized that the Ngok Dinka are convinced that for reasons that may be understandable from the perspectives of the two countries, Sudan and South Sudan, they can no longer rely on the protection of the governments of the two countries, and that the only hope for their security and stability is their self-reliance and the protection of the international community. Ironically, however, a self-governing, secure, stable and prosperous Abyei will be more able to play the bridging role it has historically played in the interest of all concerned, including the neighboring communities in the area and the two countries represented by these border communities. This Proposal is therefore a win-win arrangement for all the stakeholders.