CONFLICT EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS AND SUPPORT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT IN SUDAN[*]

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for inviting me to this interesting and timely conference. It's a pleasure to be back in Sudan and to see so many friends and colleagues from IGAD and elsewhere. It is also entirely fitting that we have these discussions in Khartoum given the fact that the protocol on the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), the focus of much of our discussions, was signed in this same city on 9 January 2002.

My understanding of the purpose of this meeting is to have an informed discussion on the re-engagement of Sudan with CEWARN in its engagement along the borders of neighbouring countries within the Horn, and secondly, to consider the potential and use of an early warning system to support the peace process in Sudan.[1]

To make the point that the Sudan peace process, both North/South and that regarding Darfur (never mind the East) is going through a difficult patch is merely a statement of the obvious. In general the peace agreement remains fragile, although it is still on track. A recent report by the International Crises Group starts its executive summary as follows:

"More than a year after it was signed, Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is showing signs of strain … and continues to lack broader support throughout the country, particularly in the North. The current equation for peace in Sudan is a worrying one: the NCP has the capacity to implement but lacks the political will, whereas the SPLM has the commitment but is weak and disorganised. There is a real risk of renewed conflict down the road …"[2]

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[*] Originally prepared for the Conference on Early Warning Systems 'Conflicts are Preventable, Peace is Sustainable', Khartoum, 11-13 April 2006 and revised thereafter.

[1] The background paper refers to the fact that: "The ultimate objective of the conference is to facilitate a debate led by Sudanese on the appropriateness and the specifications of an Early Warning System for Conflict Prevention in Sudan." Furthermore: "The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on January 9th 2005 is … a unique opportunity to revive the Sudan engagement to CEWARN, to explore other conflict areas to be included in an adapted EWS for the Sudan, and to increase the capacity of the government and international community to monitor, prevent and respond to local conflicts."

[2] Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: the long road ahead, Africa report no 106, 31 March 2006, p i.

When it comes to the application of early warning theory to conflict prevention practice, we need to 'mind the gap' – reflected in a 1996 report on early warning:

"There appears to be two forms of early warning: one in theory and one in practice. …While international organizations frequently articulate an interest in conflict prevention, in practice they are almost solely concerned with the settlement or management of existing disputes."[3]

Different to intelligence systems that serve a national security purpose with a focus is on high quality and often secret sources of information, early warning systems typically serve intergovernmental purposes and are based on networks and open sources for their information. Early warning systems originated with the requirement (within humanitarian relief agencies) for a single, reliable source of analysis to serve a coalition of clients rather than a single government. Domestically conflict early warning systems are complex and fraught with all kinds of problems since they are easily perceived to be agents of or hostile to state security interests within the context of an undemocratic or non-responsive state – or, as is the case in Sudan – where state power is contested.

Yet, in the absence of a functioning, legitimate state system across much of Sudan after several decades of war, the establishment of a neutral conflict prevention and early warning capacity dedicated to support the political transition could fill an urgent void, that of the provision of independent information and analysis.
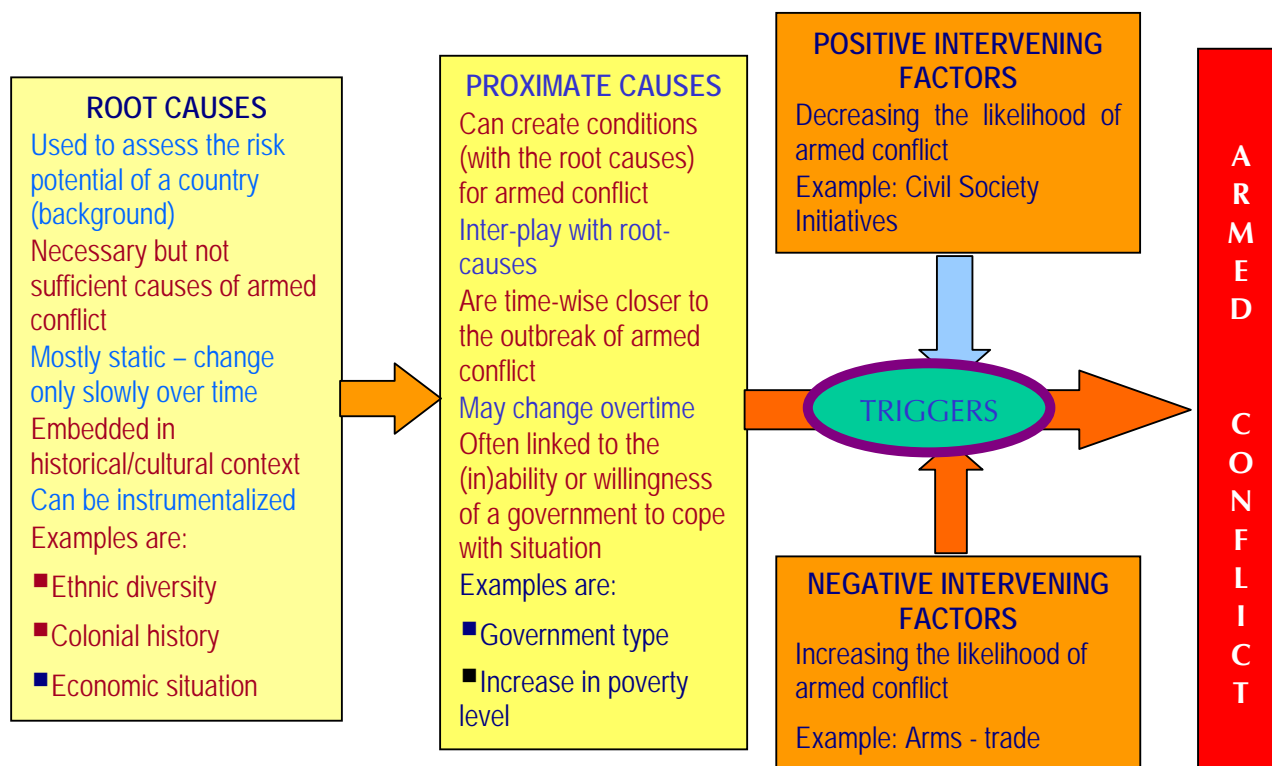
SOME GENERAL POINTERS

Generically the aim of conflict early warning is to identify critical developments in a timely manner, so that coherent response strategies can be formulated to either prevent violent conflict or limit its destructive effects. Effective early warning involves the collection and analysis of data in a uniform and systematized way and according to a commonly shared methodology. It requires the formulation and communication of analysis and policy options to relevant end-users – information towards action.

In a basic form, conflict early warning needs to tackle: (a) Which issues (manifestations, precipitating, proximate and root causes) underpin and drive the conflict? (b) Which factors put a brake on conflict and serve as the basis for peace? (c) Who are the main stakeholders in the conflict? (d) What are the practical options available to policy-makers who wish to affect the emerging conflict, avoid human suffering in the short term and move toward a sustainable settlement in the longer term? (e) The timely communication and engagement with policy-makers - to close the loop from analysis to action. These are all highly political and partisan questions within Sudan and within the region and considerable thought would have to go into designing a system and in the choice of partners in such a system. These relationships are depicted in the schematic diagram presented in Figure 1.

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[3] Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Conflict Prevention and Early Warning in the Political Practice of International Organizations, January 1996, p 71

Figure 1: Schematic display of a conflict EWS[4]

ROOT CAUSES	PROXIMATE CAUSES	POSITIVE INTERVENING FACTORS	
Used to assess the risk potential of a country (background)	Can create conditions (with the root causes) for armed conflict	Decreasing the likelihood of armed conflict	A R M E D
Necessary but not sufficient causes of armed conflict	Inter-play with root-causes	Example: Civil Society Initiatives	C O N F L I C T
Mostly static – change only slowly over time	Are time-wise closer to the outbreak of armed conflict	TRIGGERS	
Embedded in historical/cultural context	May change overtime		
Can be instrumentalized	Often linked to the (in)ability or willingness of a government to cope with situation	NEGATIVE INTERVENING FACTORS	
Examples are:	Examples are:	Increasing the likelihood of armed conflict	
▪ Ethnic diversity	▪ Government type	Example: Arms - trade	
▪ Colonial history	▪ Increase in poverty level		
▪ Economic situation			

CEWARN IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The AU's CEWS at continental level and regional systems including that of CEWARN in the Horn were established to avoid inter-state conflict and secondly to stop national problems from becoming regional headaches. CEWARN is, however, more specific and focussed than that found elsewhere in Africa. Article 5 on the functions of CEWARN reads, in part, as follows:

"1) The functions of CEWARN cover both early warning and response and shall include the following:

   a)   Promote the exchange of information and collaboration among member states on early warning and response on the basis of the following principles:

   i)   timeliness

   ii) transparency

   iii) cooperation

   iv) free flow of information

   b)   Gather, verify, process and analyse information about conflicts in the region according to the guidelines provided in the Annex.

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[4] This is taken from CEWARN, but is generic to a number of systems.

> c) *Communicate all such information and analysis to decision makers of IGAD policy organs and the national governments of Member States."*

The annex to the CEWARN protocol that sets out the 'Operating Guidelines for CEWARN', reads, in part, as follows:

"Part I: Mandate

1) CEWARN is mandated to:
 a. *receive and share information concerning potentially violent conflicts as well as their outbreak and escalation in the IGAD region;*
 b. *undertake and share analyses of that information;*
 c. *develop case scenarios and formulate options for response;*
 d. *share and communicate information, analyses and response options;*
 e. *carry out studies on specific types and areas of conflict in the IGAD region.*

Currently CEWARN is primarily aimed at providing early warning to national response mechanisms located within an appropriate government ministry such as the Department of Foreign Affairs (in the case of Ethiopia) and the Office of the President, Provincial Administration and Internal Security (in the case of Kenya). It does so in respect of the following matters in the Annex to the CEWARN protocol:

"Part II: Information

1) CEWARN shall rely for its operations on information that is collected from the public domain, particularly in the following areas:
 a. *livestock rustling;*
 b. *conflicts over grazing and water points;*
 c. *smuggling and illegal trade;*
 d. *nomadic movements;*
 e. *refugees;*
 f. *landmines;*
 g. *banditry."*

At the moment CEWARN focuses on the increasingly violent pastoral conflict along border areas that is fuelled by the availability and presence of small arms. This followed a detailed analysis of the enduring nature of the various cross-border problems and the debilitating impact that armed cattle theft has in the region. The signature of the CEWARN protocol was followed by a series of expert workshops and consultancies that eventually provided the substantive theoretical basis for the subsequent system.[5]

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[5] The "Khartoum Declaration" in Khartoum 2000 preceded the signature of the CEWARN Protocol in January 2002. The 1st Meeting of the CPS in Entebbe,Uganda, May 2002. A workshop on the Identification of Indicators followed on November 2002 was followed by various workshops to engender the CEWARN Mechanism (2003). The company VRA undertook the development of the CEWARN Reporter. A second Meeting of the CPS was held in Khartoum, March 2003, followed by missions to the Karamoja and Somali Clusters. The selection of NRIs & Training of CCs and FMs followed and the Official opening of the CEWARN Office occurred on 30th June 2003. The CEWARN Protocol entered into force in August 2003 and the TCEW was operationalization in June 2004

CEWARN is in many ways unique. On the one hand it exists as part of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). On the other it draws heavily on civil society participation. This hybrid is arguably possible since national agencies and civil society organizations from one country naturally coalesce and mobilize in support of common national interests. This has allowed for the uncontested integration of the national components of CEWARN, the CEWERU's[6], into state structures in countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya where they are seen to complement existing state security and delivery structures.

In simple terms CEWARN appointed field monitors provide incident and weekly reports through a dedicated National Research Institute[7] to the CEWERU within the country concerned. The CEWERU reports to the CEWARN unit in Addis Ababa where the data is codified and where quality control is performed. Based on a sophisticated analysis and reporting tool, CEWARN puts out monthly and alert reports.[8]

Currently CEWARN is active in two clusters (as pilot projects), namely the Karamoja (Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia border) and Somali (Ethiopia, Kenya, Somali) clusters. Apparently a welcome expansion into the Sudan/Uganda border area is being considered.

The ISS concluded a 2005 paper on the CEWS[9] by remarking that:

"The ECOWAS system is at an early stage of development but represents the most comprehensive and logically integrated system for conflict prevention and management on the continent ... The conceptual maturity of the regional system also reflects a commitment by West African leaders to engage with the extensive regional conflict systems in the region. They have institutionalised (on paper if not always in practice) the linkage between good governance and conflict prevention through the adoption of a supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance."

Whereas West Africa has the most politically developed and mature system, IGAD/CEWARN is potentially the most sophisticated available amongst the RECs, if still limited in geographical scope.

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[6] National conflict early warning and response mechanisms

[7] InterAfrica in Ethiopia, Africa Peace Forum in Ethiopia, Centre for Basic Research in Uganda. Probably the Peace Research Institute at the University of Khartoum for Sudan.

[8] During the conference participants were briefed about the two alert reports that have been issued thus far, namely one on 27 July 2005 about the conflict between Dassenech and Rukana fisherman about fishing activity on Lake Turkana that involved Kenyan security forces that could have invited reciprocal intervention from the Ethiopian security forces. A second alert was issued on 9 September 2005 about conflict between two Ethiopian pastoral communities, the Nyangatom and Dassenech, during which 10 persons were killed and 220 cattle were stolen.

[9] Jakkie Cilliers, 'Towards a Continental Early Warning System for Africa', Institute for Security Studies Paper no 102, April 2005.
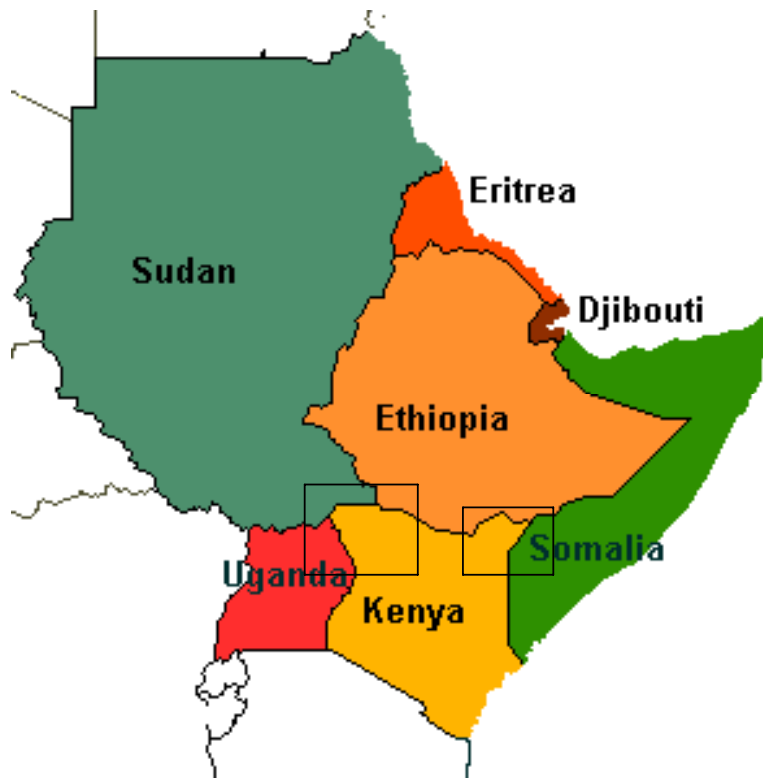
Figure 2: Current CEWARN areas of engagement

Beyond the technical and conceptual challenges associated with early warning and response, the single biggest challenge faced by all early warning and response systems is linking good analysis with timely action. The linkage to timely action means clarity, proximity and engagement with those institutions responsible for action. In the case of the AU the key users for the CEWS are: the Peace and Security Council, the office of the Chairperson of the Commission and that of the Commissioner for Peace and Security, other departments within the AU and various components of the PSC system such as the Panel of the Wise. In the case of CEWARN there is a complicated and somewhat distant relationship between the system and its response mechanism (national governments, the IGAD secretariat and its political masters) that still has to prove itself in practice. Hence the conclusion in an earlier ISS report:

"Technically, the CEWARN system is complex and authoritative but has not yet closed the gap between analysis, options and actions. It is difficult to see how this will be possible in the longer term without the co-location of CEWARN (in Addis Ababa) and IGAD (in Djibouti) and the development of an integrated conflict prevention, management and response system similar to that working in West Africa and under development in Southern Africa. Without the mechanisms to harness and focus political will to action by IGAD Member States, the danger is that CEWARN may not be able to operationalise its conflict prevention ambitions

at the regional level."[10]

Admittedly this conclusion does not give credit to the second and potentially fruitful focus of CEWARN, namely to initiate and support local conflict prevention working with and through local structures.

Early warning systems are necessarily tailored to their particular function and client(s). Each end-user (such as the Peace and Security Council of the AU) necessarily needs a system to meet its particular needs, resources, organisational culture and response mechanisms. CEWARN in the Horn is a particularly distinct and carefully designed system to meet particular and specific requirements. But equally the early warning system for the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council differs from that being developed for SADC and its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

This view leads to two obvious conclusions. On the one hand a degree of practical scepticism appears to be warranted on the idea that Africa would be able to develop an integrated CEWS system. It is more likely that the AU and each regional economic community (REC) would develop an own system tailored to the specific requirements and usage of each organization within a loose cooperative relationship between systems. More relevant to this paper, it probably rules out the option of expanding the CEWARN (dedicated to pastoral conflict across common borders) system for use in the Sudan (i.e. at national level) without considerable adaptation.

AN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR THE SUDAN

The fact that CEWARN may not be appropriate for use in support of the transition process in Sudan should not detract from the requirement for a system of conflict early warning to:

- Provide independent information on the state of (in)security/the implementation of the peace process in an objective and non-partisan manner to the Government of National Unity in Khartoum, the Government of South Sudan in Juba, participating State governments, the UN system, donors/partners and critically, ordinary Sudanese.

- Initiate local conflict prevention action (for example through links with tribal leaders) or inform prevention action at the State or national level.

Given the limited information flows in Sudan, any system would have to rely upon field monitors in each participating State for the provision of event data. Each participatory State could probably be 'covered' by an average of five field monitors - costing less than $1 000 per month per State. These monitors would have to be trained and have access to appropriate communication means with one of the two coordination unit, one in Khartoum (for the GNU) and the other in Juba (for the

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[10] Other conclusions related to costs, the utility of the CEWARN methodology at the regional as apposed to the local level and the requirements for relatively transparency open sources and civil society involvement. Jakkie Cilliers, op cit, p 14

GSS)[11] and it would have to build in appropriate accountability and consultative mechanisms through which all key stakeholders are brought to the table. Each of the two coordination units would require an office, computers, a minimum of three staff with guaranteed power supply and internet access. Additional provision would have to be made for dissemination, liaison functions, a briefing room replete with maps and graphs, as well as additional experts to feed and add in the analysis that is generated by various other components with in the UN and other systems. In contrast to the cautious approach adopted by CEWARN, a public dissemination strategy in the interests of its primary beneficiaries - ordinary Sudanese – is a key success factor for such a system. Once quality assurance and information dissemination/outreach systems have been put in place the only outstanding item would be the development of geographical information presentation tools.

The practical phases in the establishment of this system are relatively straightforward and consist of: the choice and customization of an established system, baseline research, implementation (deployment and training) and maintenance.

- Choice: Time and cost considerations would favour the choice of an established and mature system such as the Integrated Data for Event Analysis (IDEA) that has, amongst others, been adopted by FAST International and customized for pastoral conflict by CEWARN. Fully-fledged IDEA systems have a wide focus and include more than two hundred different event types that would require limited additional input for application in the Sudan. System costs are difficult to estimate but could range from say $30 000 (including customization) to several hundred thousand dollars if developed commercially.

- Base-line study: All conflict response systems start off with a base-line assessment on the level of insecurity and threats to human security – and such an assessment is absolutely critical in the Sudan to build sustainable peace. Sudan does not have sufficient or appropriate data upon which to plan much of the post conflict reconstruction and development projects that are unfolding at the moment and that will do so in the years that lie ahead. Perhaps the most pressing of these examples relate to the information requirements upon which to plan the various security sector reform projects that are needed. Various mechanisms exist that could assist in this regard, including crime victimisation studies and the like. A number of applied research survey techniques and related efforts could help fill the information gap that will inevitably constrain and limit response strategies.[12]

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[11] Both coordination units would feed into a single database so that all the components of system for Sudan would be available at both units.

[12] Admittedly, some efforts are already underway to map Sudan's insecurity. For example a Human Security Baseline Assessment in Sudan is one week into its first household surveys of small arms demand and effects. The largest (500-1000) of the undertaking concerns Rumbek and its immediate environs. A second, smaller initiative concerns the Juba area (250-500 households). The deteriorating security situation in and around Yei made an effort

- Implementation: The most important aspect of implementation would be the choice of the hosting institution, oversight and political/domestic ownership considerations. The associated processes would imply a series of participatory workshops with political and civil society actors, various training activities and the identification of the parameters of the system (for example the decision on which States would be covered), definition of the types of events, etc.

- Maintenance: Refresher training, ongoing quality assurance, IT and other ongoing support, including support from the software system supplier. Given the intensity that will be required from a Sudan human security early warning system output would be high - probably requiring weekly rather than monthly reports.

It would be crucial for a Sudan conflict early warning system to be able to feed off the extensive applied research that is being done for the multitude of agencies engaged with the transition process. To this end the establishment of the system discussed in these pages should be complemented by a research and analysis capacity that can access and digest these results.

CONCLUSION

In an ideal world there would be little impediment for the various negotiating parties in Sudan to agree on the establishment of a neutral and separate system that tracks conflict or security concerns in the country.[13] In the real world, control of information flows is deeply political and security is not a neutral, value-free concept. The political independence and integrity of a conflict early warning system for the Sudan and the choices regarding the organisations/institutions with which it is formally affiliated and of its key staff are critical matters if such a system is to survive and traverse the turbulent domestic politics of Sudan – in many ways more important than the challenges presented by the diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity and limited infrastructure that will inevitably complicate implementation.

While this paper did not discuss the re-engagement of Sudan within the current operations of CEWARN, this is an obvious requirement if the region is to move towards a regional conflict response mechanism. Having Sudan commit fully and unequivocally to the commitments reflected in the CEWARN protocol would be good

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to conduct a survey there too chancy to proceed but discussions on conducting surveys in Wau, Malakal, and Kapoeta have occurred. The project plans to conduct similar surveys in the East and in the West over the next 12 months. Elsewhere a system to track and monitor returnees to Southern Sudan already works towards a Joint Operations Centre.

[13] For legal and practical considerations it would not be possible to simply extend CEWARN to cover Sudan. CEWARN is established within the framework of IGAD and at the behest of member states and such a decision would require changes to the legal protocol that governs CEWARN as well as the legal agreement of the negotiating parties to the Government of National Unity of Sudan. Second, the CEWARN system would have to be reconfigured to allow for a wider system of event data than its current format optimized for pastoral conflict.

for Sudan, the region and for IGAD. The Horn of Africa faces many challenges of which armed resource competition across borders is a key ingredient. With peace in the Sudan the opportunities and demands that will be placed on CEWARN to extend its operations along the complex and divisive boundaries in the south (in particular) present numerous challenges, as would Darfur and the situation in the East. Once CEWARN has expanded to cover these additional border areas the major challenge for IGAD remains the development of a comprehensive response system at the national and regional level similar to that under development in other regions such as ECOWAS.

Nothing written in this paper can detract from the ultimate responsibility for domestic security that must lie with the government of Sudan and its various agencies. Any measures in support of the transition in Sudan should therefore have, as its ultimate purpose the building of state systems and act in support of legitimate post-transition national institutions. A conflict early warning system for Sudan can, therefore, only be of a transitory nature. The challenge for Sudan is the absence of legitimate national systems in the interim and the vagrancies of the transitional period that lie ahead that will severely degrade the capacity of national security agencies and institutions. The development of a dedicated system to track conflict trends related to (in)security in support of the Sudan peace process should therefore be seen for what it is – a temporary arrangement that should, in time, become part of the state system or fade away. Yet at the current stage of the peace process a conflict early warning system could go a long way to removing the provision of key conflict information from contested political control. Ideally such a system should be developed with the full cooperation and support of the parties to the CPA, the parties to the talks on Darfur and elsewhere. This 'best' solution may, however, not be practically achievable within reasonable time. While is theoretically possible for the UN to establish an independent mechanism to monitor and track violence in Sudan, or for donors to fund various Sudanese partners to perform such a function, the option to appoint an independent neutral agent to implement (but not staff) an early warning system or to create an entirely new unit for this purpose in the Sudan may be less desirable but inevitable.

Thank you.