

LARGO, MD - This afternoon, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) joined Princeton Lyman, the President's Special Envoy for Sudan; Raja Jandhyala, Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID's Africa Bureau; and representatives of the Prince George's County Africa Trade Office and the Association of Maryland Africa Societies, for a panel discussion on the security and economic situation in Sudan and future trade opportunities with the world's newest nation. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

"When I traveled to South Sudan in 2007, I saw a country ready to take its place in the family of nations, eager for a chance to chart its own future. Its independence this July was a cause for rejoicing, a moment certainly meaningful to Americans who, having celebrated the 235th anniversary of our own just days before, understand very well what it means to yearn for self-government.

"I also witnessed a country that, despite its surplus of spirit and hopefulness suffers from great deficits when it comes to health access, the means for economic development, and freedom from conflict. Four years after my visit, these same challenges remain.

"Now more than ever, it is critical that the international community come together to help the people of South Sudan build their new country. Foreign businesses are already scrambling to identify potential projects and lay the groundwork to go in. American businesses – and in particular, I believe, Maryland businesses – can find great opportunities as the South Sudanese look to expand their agricultural sector and build infrastructure components. They already recognize that an economy where 98 percent of the GDP comes from oil revenues isn't a viable option for long-term development.

"Now, of course there are several challenges. The first is ongoing violence. The governments in Khartoum and Juba continue to disagree over the status of the Abyei region, and fighting between ethnic groups continues across both Sudans, with people losing their lives daily. At the same time, the two governments have yet to settle on a long-term oil revenue-sharing agreement or final borders, threatening their already-precarious ties.

"The second is the economic situation, specifically the lack of existing infrastructure, to which I know USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Raja Jandhyala can speak in greater detail. Most of South Sudan's roads were built by the Chinese, and they run, conveniently, from the South's oil fields north to Sudan. I know that of concern to the South Sudanese is the role a strengthened agricultural sector can play in maintaining food security, especially in the wake of the recent East African famine.

"Third is the humanitarian situation, with one of the worst health outlooks in the world. Two

percent of all mothers die in childbirth, and more than one in ten children die before the age of five. At the same time, there remains a dire shortage of doctors and surgeons. This new nation is plagued by endemic diseases, malnutrition, malaria. These human development challenges must be addressed.

"A further challenge is ensuring a stable, democratic government that respects human rights and committed to tackling corruption. President Kiir has committed to an aggressive anti-corruption agenda, but there is much work to do. Corruption is a profound problem and Kiir must redouble efforts to decentralize his government. They need help developing the skills and talents necessary to run essential government agencies that deal with health, education, and finance. We saw a hopeful sign this week when President Kiir met with President Obama at the UN and reiterated his pledge to investigate diverted funds and regulate government contracts more strictly.

"Ultimately, though, what I see in the country more than anything else is promise. South Sudan is a newly independent state with experience holding democratic elections, with a government recognized as both legitimate and representative, and with a people energetic about building their new country and playing a productive role in the international community and global marketplace. President Kiir and his government have already set ambitious goals, including a multi-year project to build a new capital and efforts to expand their rail network. USAID and other agencies are working with the government in Juba to make sure our assistance is getting to those who need it. South Sudanese living in diaspora are beginning to return, and they will bring with them much-needed skills to help build their new country.

"Companies in Maryland and across the nation certainly should look at South Sudan as a place with great investment potential down the line. Moving forward, one of the most important things we can do is make sure the international community works together to create a framework for continued engagement and assistance. I am looking forward to hearing from the President's Special Envoy for Sudan, Ambassador Princeton Lyman, and Deputy Assistant Administrator Raja Jandhyala about what we can do with our international partners to aid South Sudan's development and ensure that the world's newest nation not only survives but thrives."