

## Last call?

The Kacoke Madit resolutions for peace in northern Uganda come at the point of opportunity for forging a peace in Sudan and the region, if the United States, in particular, musters the political will to reverse its failed policy of war. Under pressure of the famine conditions in Sudan's Bahr el-Ghazal state which is under his control, John Garang's SPLA has announced a three-month cease-fire in that area in order to permit the delivery of urgently required food aid. The Sudan government's call for a cease-fire at the negotiations held under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) had met with a refusal from Garang. In the Congressional hearings in Washington, Unicef director Carol Bellamy and World Food Program director Catherine Bertini urged that the United States take full advantage of the cease-fire to push a breakthrough toward peace.

Another round of IGAD negotiations between the Sudan

government and the SPLA begins Aug. 7, in Adis Abeba, Ethiopia. This time, Susan Rice said, the United States will send a "high-level diplomat," but she declined to say who. Heretofore, the United States has largely ignored the IGAD process, as it pursued its war course.

However, Congressmen Tony Hall and Frank Wolf (R-Va.) are calling for a Special Presidential Envoy to put peace on the front-burner of U.S. policy toward Sudan and Uganda. This envoy would need to be appointed immediately in order to take advantage of the partial cease-fire that now exists. For the people of southern Sudan and the people of northern Uganda—as the Kacoke Madit made clear for the latter case—peace is the first requirement. In both cases, populations face near annihilation as they are caught in the cross fire. Given the desire on the part of major parties for peace, further pursuit of the failed policy of war in southern Sudan and northern Uganda by the United States can only be taken as a death sentence against the people of the region.

## Hunger, disintegration in Kitgum District

*Here are excerpts from the presentation to the Kacoke Madit given on July 18 by George Odwong, Resident District Commissioner of Kitgum District, reporting for the District Disaster Committee:*

Kitgum District has been experiencing intermittent insecurity for the last 12 years as a result of insurgency that began in 1986. The war has changed form many times and consequently also its objectives, targets, and operational modes. From about 1992, the emergence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group, saw the emergence of a military operation that increasingly began to target civilians especially children, who were specifically targeted as a means of forced recruitment into their ranks. The consequences of this insurgency are numerous and obvious. Over time, the people and their societal codes have become overwhelmed and disorganized by the magnitude of this problem. Testimonies of awful experiences among all categories of people reveal the extent to which people have suffered physically and psychologically. As a result of the degradation of the status of the people, they are now compelled to live under very stressful conditions like displacement, abduction, deprivation, victimization, humiliation, separation, and institutionalization. All these have prompted people to develop life support mechanisms that in most cases have high elements of negative social

and economic trends. This is seen through the increased signs of hopelessness, helplessness, and desperation, such as high rates of alcohol intake, rise in prostitution, child-family neglect, etc. These arose because the power that held the society together is lost with all life's investment, yet nothing seems promising in the future.

This already precarious situation has been aggravated further by the dry weather conditions. Being predominantly dependent on agriculture for food production and income, the nutritional levels have seriously dropped throughout the district. A food security survey conducted by an integrated team from the district under the District Extension Coordinator revealed severe food shortages in many households, where up to 73% of the population sampled in five worst-hit sub-counties of Ormo, Namokora, Madi Opei, Agoro, and Paimol, were not sure of their next meal. There has also been a marked increase in malnutrition cases in the feeding centers, especially at the supplementary feeding center run by Action Contre la Faim [Action Against Hunger] at the St. Joseph's Hospital. Registered cases of famine-related death have been reported in the sub-counties of Orom and Madi Opei. It is important to note that the problem of food scarcity is no more critical in areas or sub-counties that have no relief food supply. . . .

The district is experiencing a big problem in addressing the needs of other people who are suffering other forms of disaster [not in the camps], especially food scarcity, which has now become a very critical matter that if not addressed with some urgency may lead to a calamity. This is because of the limited resources at its disposal, and the poor response from donors, including government.