Judd Devermont: Good morning, good afternoon. My name is Judd Devermont and I'm delighted to welcome you to Partnering for Peace in Sudan, a conversation with Senator Van Hollen and Sudan's ambassador to the United States, Nureldin Satti.

Just a quick disclaimer. Due to a Portuguese labor strike, I'm broadcasting from my hotel room in Praia, Cabo Verde. It's not a bad place to be stranded, but it may affect my connectivity. And if any case I freeze or drop, our colleague Jon Temin, who's director of the Freedom House's Africa Program, will step in to moderate the rest of the event.

So, let me start with the obvious, which is that Sudan is undergoing a crucial transition from the dictatorship Omar al-Bashir to the possibility of democratic rule. It is far from assured, but it is the best chance for peace in more than 30 years. In late 2018, Sudanese headed to the streets to protest bread and fuel prices in the town of Atbara. From this initial demonstration, a broad coalition of women, students, and professional classes emerged to take down the al-Bashir regime, which had been implicated in genocide and other atrocities during its three-decade rule.

The government's eventual ouster in April 2019 ushered in a hopeful, yet fragile transition period, with the military and civilians sharing power to guide the country to a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future. It also enabled the U.S. government to remove some of the final sanctions imposed on Sudan, including its designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. However, as I mentioned, a positive conclusion to the transition period of far from certain. Let me summarize just a few challenges.

First, there is an unhappy marriage between and within the civilian and military governing coalitions. Prime Minister Hamdok recently acknowledged there are cracks and divisions on the civilian side and noted deeply worrying fractures between rival military factions. Number two, the government is negotiating with rebel groups in Darfur as well as in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, with varying degrees of success. The incorporation of these parties has required an elongation of the transition period and the necessity of handing out new positions in the various transitional bodies. Meanwhile, there has been an uptick in fighting in the wake of the departure of the U.N.-AU peacekeeping force.

Number three, the country's facing a serious economic crisis. Despite the lifting of the state sponsor of terrorism designation and debt relief from many donors, including the United States, there have been shortages of key commodities and very high inflation. Protests over the economic crisis has become routine across Africa – excuse me, across Sudan. Number four, Sudan's foreign relations have been under considerable strain, especially with Ethiopia. There has been significant fighting between the two countries
near Fashaga, on their shared border, and the second fill of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has resulted in a very dangerous standoff between Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt. And finally, there is this issue of accountability for the crimes committed by the al-Bashir regime. And it is a delicate balance between bringing those responsible to justice and ensuring a smooth transition to a more just Sudan.

Now, with all of these challenges in mind, Senator Van Hollen in May visited Sudan, along with Senator Chris Coons, to assess the country’s progress. I think it’s a testament to how important Sudan is, and its transition is, to the U.S. Congress. We’re delighted that Senator Van Hollen is here today to share his reflections and engage in a discussion with Sudan’s ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Satti. We’ll talk about the way forward and how the United States can partner with Sudan for peace in this critical region.

I’m going to hand it over to the senator for some opening remarks, but let me, quick, just introduce our esteemed guests.

Senator Chris Van Hollen has represented the state of Maryland since January 3rd, 2017. He previously served as the U.S. representative for Maryland’s 8th Congressional District from 2003 to 2017. He is currently the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Africa and Global Health Policy.

Ambassador Nureldin Satti is Sudan’s first ambassador to the United States in over 20 years. He’s a veteran diplomat, having served as the former Sudanese ambassador to France in the 1990s. Ambassador Satti has held several high-level positions at the U.N. and has worked on conflict situations in both the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa.

Senator Van Hollen, thank you so much for joining us today. Would you like to start with just a brief reflection on your trip? I think it will be valuable to hear your perspective on why Sudan and Sudan’s transition are important to U.S. interests and what role you see for the U.S. Congress.

Chris Van Hollen: Well, Judd, let me start by thanking you and your team at CSIS for bringing us together for today’s conversation, as well as your leadership, generally, on issues involving Sudan, Africa, and other areas.

And I must say it’s a privilege and honor to be here with Ambassador Satti. We’ve had the chance to talk through many of these issues, and having grown up in a family of diplomats, I know a good one when I see one, and I want to thank him for everything he’s doing to strengthen relations between the United States and Sudan at this critical moment.
As you said, Judd, Chris Coons, and I – Senator Coons and I had a, really, what we thought was a positive trip to Sudan in May. Both of us serve on both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, and we thought it was very important to visit Sudan at this moment to show our support for the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

And we were impressed with all the people we met with. You know, we met with high-level officials – Prime Minister Hamdok, the chairman of the Sovereign Council, General Burhan. We met with ministers of finance and justice and foreign affairs, the minister of irrigation and water to discuss the GERD and other issues relating to agriculture, and with members of civil society, young people, women leaders, and I think we had a really good visit with a great cross-section of Ethiopian society.

And we came away more than – more determined than ever to work with our colleagues in the Congress and with the Biden administration to make sure that the United States is a partner with the people of Sudan during this transition, which, as you described, was a remarkable peaceful revolution that removed Bashir from power in 2019.

But the path forward is, you know, far from assured, and just a couple, you know, reflections based on the conversations that we had.

First, on the economic front. As you said, Judd, you know, we’re still in COVID-19 in Sudan and many parts of Africa, of course, and everywhere in the world. But in terms of the intensity, even more there. And we’re also seeing rising fuel prices, and the economy, of course, is front and center on the minds of the people of Sudan and this government.

So the United States did move very quickly early on, forgiving, essentially, our bilateral debt. We’ve been working with international financial institutions to try to provide broader debt relief and, of course, we had the good news on Friday from the Paris Club where they, essentially, canceled $14 billion worth of debt, rescheduled $9.4 billion (dollars) and also encouraged other countries like the Saudis and the Kuwaitis to join us in this effort. That’s going to be really important to reintegrate Sudan into the global economy and address these pressing economic issues.

The United States has also committed $700 million in funds through AID. Ambassador Samantha Power, who’s the administrator now of AID, is very focused on this, and we in the Senate have been very focused on it as well.

And it’s taken too long, but the good news is I think we now have a plan that’s come together in consultation with the government of Sudan and, hopefully, that will be finalized and released soon. I’d also like to see Sudan
included in our Power Africa program and, as Sudan undertakes some of these reforms in its economy, really push the Development Finance Corporation to engage U.S. companies in investing in Sudan.

On the political front, as you mentioned, Judd, the need to really integrate the armed forces under one command that is in turn under civilian control is one of the critical issues. That was very much part of our conversations in Sudan, and that has to, of course, include the RSF coming under that umbrella. And in order to fully implement the Juba peace agreement and bring in those, you know, militias and parties that are not yet, you know, fully part of this agreement, it's going to be very necessary to ensure that that integration of the military takes place. Obviously, having lots of militias was a big part of Sudan's, you know, past instability and that needs to be addressed going forward.

You also mentioned the need for a peace and reconciliation effort and to achieve accountability, not just in Darfur, although that's important, but other parts of Sudan, and the minister of, a very impressive person, is very focused on that effort. We had a great conversation with him.

And then, of course, making sure the people of Sudan feel that they're being heard and are fully invested in this democracy, and Prime Minister Hamdok in that very important speech he gave at the end of June said he'd like to see those legislative elections take place within 90 days from the time he gave that speech. And that's something very much on the minds of people.

And finally, we want to work with Sudan to address many of these challenges they got from a huge refugee population, a huge population of internally displaced people, over 3.6 million in those categories, and, of course, an additional influx of 60,000 refugees from the Tigray area because of the conflict in Ethiopia. And Senator Coons and I visited one of the refugee camps that had been set up to address the Ethiopian refugees and were impressed by the Sudanese government, by USAID, the World Food Program, and the U.N. Refugee Agency.

And finally, as you mentioned, Sudan is having to make – working to make this transition to democracy and peace in a turbulent neighborhood, you've got the issues of the GERD. You've got all the instability in neighboring Chad, and so many other issues. And I was pleased that, you know, President Biden did appoint an envoy, Jeff Feldman, on behalf of the United States to address a lot of these regional issues.

So let me just close where I started. Senator Coons and I had a really what we thought was a productive, positive visit, and we are committed to working with the people of Sudan, the government of Sudan, the ambassador, to try to make sure we're successful. Sudan is a very strategically important country,
and of course the Biden administration has re-centered our foreign policy on issues of democracy, rule of law, and human rights. And so it’s very important that we do everything possible to make this peaceful revolution that was started by women and young people in the streets, make it succeed as a great example of what happens when people’s voices can be heard.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Senator. That was a remarkable scene setter for us and the benefit of your on-the-ground insights I think will really enrich this conversation.

Ambassador Satti, let me ask you if you would like to add to the senator’s opening remarks with your own perspective, and then I’m going to ask you to pivot and let’s dive deep into some of the economic challenges, because I know it’s something that you’re working on very hard right now.

Nureldin Satti: Well, thank you very much, Judd. Let me thank you and your team and CSIS for organizing this important event.

I am honored and privileged to be in company of Senator Van Hollen, and thank him deeply for his support and support that we are getting from Senator Coons. Their visit to Sudan was really, you know, very important for us. It reflected the deep interest and importance that Congress and Senate give to Sudan. I am grateful for the support that we are having from that administration – from President Biden’s administration, which has put Sudan among the priorities in Africa and in the Middle East.

Well, I couldn't actually have done it better than Senator Van Hollen. (Laughs.) He has really highlighted, you know, the situation in a remarkable manner, as he said. But let me say that when you said at the beginning that it was not going to be an easy transition – we had been through transitions before. And we wanted it to be – or, we wanted it to be right this time around. In former transition, as you well know, Sudan is one of the first countries in Africa who tried to have an attempt at democracy, even before the independence, during the self-rule period from 1953 to 1956. And we had two attempts at democracy in 1964, 1985, and this has not worked.

So, for us, it’s very important to get it right this time around. And that’s why we have taken the decision that – to create a partnership, a wise partnership – (inaudible) – between civilians. Within the civilian, I would say, constituency itself there is a wide coalition of parties, groups, civil society groups, those who played a major part in the transition that has taken place – the youth, the women, those who – the professionals and the political parties. And we have worked very hard since the beginning to make sure that we have the military on the right side of history this time. And that’s why we – together we concluded this agreement, this, I would say, partnership, that is not an easy one, as you said, like all partnerships.
But of course, the civilians and military are coming from completely different, I would say, professional, social, cultural, and political cultures. And in order to do the necessary adjustments it always takes a lot of time. And this we knew. But we are aware also, both of us – both civilian and military – are aware of this historical moment, and that we have to make it together this time. And that democracy – the Sudanese model of democracy should work. And the Sudanese model should work as the prime minister has said.

And so an uneasy transition in which we are building a consensus for working together among the various political and military partners. And in the PM – the prime minister's speech, he highlighted the importance of this partnership. And he offered a plan for it to happen. And of course, an important part of the solution also is the peace agreement that have been signed in Juba and the continued peace process to bring in the two groups that have not adhered this agreement thus far. And we are hopeful that they will do that in the near future.

And of course, we are aware of the importance of addressing grievances that were behind, the cost of the many wars that Sudan has suffered from, ever since 1955. This is an important matter of transition, also how to address these grievances and to bring in, like, the allies, leaders, and areas into the national fold in a peaceful manner and a constructive one. And of course, rebuilding the state apparatus and governance institutions that have been dilapidated by a former regime is important.

And governance includes, of course, all the constitutional and legal systems that uphold basic freedoms and human rights, including accountability, transitional justice. Legislations on transitional justice have just been passed a couple of days ago and have been posted in the Official Gazette, the equivalent of the Federal Register in the U.S. And I think this is great news. Initially, it was a discussion that Senator Van Hollen had with the justice minister, and he addressed these concerns about these legislations, and these legislations are now out – the transitional justice commission and the legislation concerning the peace commission, legislation commissions, accountability, and the recovery of stolen assets and others.

So now we are building gradually the state structures in a way that will be responsive to the demands and aspirations of the people of Sudan, but we are also aware of the difficulties. And we knew this in the beginning that was, as I said, not going to be easy.

The economic situation, of course, is a disastrous one, I would say, the one that we have inherited and the one we are now trying to address and redress – and building economic structures from scratch, I would say, because the former regime had also actually built economic and financial networks
outside the citizens. And it’s very important now to see to it that we are rebuilding those structures and systems, digitalizing the economy. In today’s world, as you know, you have – in order to fulfill the requirements of accountability in any economy in the world you have to go digital, and that’s what we are trying to do. And I’m happy to note that we are being assisted by our friends in the United States. USAID is helping us in that respect, and the World Bank also, and including other reform that are being done.

Bank transfers are a matter of concern to us. And gradually our central bank, our Ministry of Finance are finding the right measures to do that in cooperation with the U.S. Treasury here and with other partners, and building viable economic and trade channels, and finding the appropriate trade model that responds to the needs and expectations of the Sudanese people. This has not been easy because we have many schools of thought in Sudan, as in every other country, and we needed to get it to do things in the right way. And linking the Sudanese economy to the international financial and economic system after three decades of isolation is not an easy matter, but here also I would like to thank our friends in the U.S. and in the international community who are supporting us to get this done. And here, of course, I refer to the measure – decision of removing Sudan from the list of countries that are harboring terrorism and assisting Sudan with the HIPC process. And Senator Van Hollen has mentioned the decision by Paris – Paris Club a few days ago, which is well – really appreciated.

Now, of course, we are working very hard in order to create a conducive environment for investments and attracting this investment. The critical areas are agriculture and then the infrastructure, IT, and digital transformation, as I said earlier. And the objective of all this, of course, is reforming the economy, getting things done, and creating jobs – creating jobs, which is a central issue. It’s a key issue. We have to create jobs for the thousands and thousands of young women and men who are behind this revolution, and they need and they have every right to claim their rightful place in the society and in the working place. And we are working on that.

Senator Van Hollen mentioned the issue of COVID-19. Of course, we have been suffering, all of us, of this pandemic. Sudan has been hard hit by that, and we appreciate the support that we are getting from the U.S., through COVAX, and through other means in order to address the question of COVID. And we look forward to further cooperation.

In the area of security, we are also there building new structures in which we can accommodate those forces which are outside our armed forces. And there is a plan that is being put in place in order to do that – do that, including the armed forces that have just joined the Juba Agreement and, of course, RSF in order to see what sort of formula, what plan, what roadmap we can have in order to get a national Sudanese army, a professional army,
which is conscious of its duties of upholding the constitution and supporting the democratic transition process.

Thank you very much, Judd.

Judd Devermont: Thank you, Ambassador. That is a very long to-do list that would challenge any country. But I appreciate you enumerating it in such detail. It gives us a good place to continue our conversation.

And, Senator Van Hollen, I want to turn back to you because I’d like to zoom on – zoom in on the challenge and the tension between this military and civilian marriage or partnership. It seems to me that it’s – if we can’t get that right, it will be very difficult to move forward on all of the things that Ambassador Satti and you have said.

Ambassador Satti said that we must make sure the military is on the right side of history, and I wanted to get your read on that. In your impression, can they work together or at least just make enough progress to integrate the RSF, to implement the Juba Accord? You know, what is your sense of where we are in terms of this partnership and, you know, what the U.S. could or friends of Sudan do to help make sure it moves along?

And then it would be helpful, I think, at this juncture as well to hear some of your other – some of the other big risks of the transition, in your mind, and particularly, you know, around accountability and justice.

Chris Van Hollen: Sure. And I will start with the issue of, you know, integrating, you know, the military under one command and that, in turn, being under civilian control, because I do think that, together with the economy, that is the biggest issue and, of course, that issue also, you know, relates to the ability to bring in, you know, the groups that are not yet, you know, part of the fold under the Juba Peace Agreement.

And I can very clearly state that, you know, the – Prime Minister Hamdok and General Burhan are absolutely committed to that goal of bringing the different military components in. I think as we – we know the biggest challenge in that regard has been the RSF forces, and the United States – and I know our embassy team there, and I want to take this opportunity to actually, you know, give them a shout out and thank them. They are, of course, very focused on this issue. This was very much part of the conversations we had with Sudanese government officials.

And, you know, my view is that the United States should use the assets that we have to work to professionalize the Sudanese army. Of course, you know, it’s a little bit of chicken and the egg here. But we need to use the resources
we have and the capabilities we have as an inducement, including our military training funds, or IMF funds. I’d like to see them be put to use here.

As you know, we have the continuing statute on the books that relates to the Bashir days with respect to no U.S. security assistance directly flowing, and so this is an area we’re going to have to explore changing, given the, obviously, changed circumstances on the ground with this new government that is committed to the transition to democracy.

So that is something we’ll have to look at. Not just look at, I’d like to see us amend it. But in the meantime, we should be identifying the resources that we can bring to bear on that effort.

And I do think the economy, the issue of unifying the military under civilian control, and, as you just said, you know, addressing the issues of accountability for, you know, crimes and atrocities that have been committed is going to be a very important part of signaling to the people of Sudan that, you know, things are different and that this government has learned the lessons from its past.

Clearly, there are many, you know, questions about exactly how to implement that, set up the structure, as the ambassador said. The proposal has now been released by the ministry of – the minister of justice. And I know it was his intent to have a series of conversations around the country to really bring the people of Sudan together in these listening sessions as to how best to design – you know, complete the design and implement that accountability process so that it achieves the goals of reconciliation and bringing people together and accountability without jeopardizing, you know, the fragile move toward democracy.

Judd Devermont: And, sir, I think that’s a very wise diagnosis and I agree with a number of those policy recommendations. They’re really critical to put Sudan in the right direction.

We’ve for the most part focused on the internal challenges, although both you and Ambassador Satti alluded to some of the foreign policy challenges. And I’d like to spend a little time just getting deeper into them because it’s at the top of many people’s minds right now.

Ambassador Satti, Sudan cannot have a successful transition if it is stuck in very difficult foreign policy conflicts with its neighbors, and particularly here I’m talking about Ethiopia. So we’ve got the border dispute over Fashaga. We’ve got the GERD, which is right now nearing the end of its second fill. What are the ways that we can work together to de-escalate these tensions and to resolve some of these challenges so that we can get back to the work of Sudan’s transition?
Nureldin Satti: Yeah. Thank you, Judd.

Let me thank Senator Van Hollen for the point that he mentioned concerning helping Sudan with this security sector reform and removing some of the restriction that had been imposed under Bashir, and which to my mind are no longer relevant, actually, because the change that has taken place in Sudan is not a military coup. It is a revolution led by the people under the eyes and within the earshot of the world, and it is those military themselves who went to the military command and requested the military to assist them to topple al-Bashir, which the military have done. We can say, yes, they had their own ideas about it, are still, you know, espousing some of – but the main message is that they are partners and that we agreed on a constitutional document that we are implementing now. And we are working together in good faith in order to implement what we have agreed upon, and – including the peace process, which is very important in this context.

So I – my plea is that this situation be understood in the U.S. in general, in the administration, and in Congress, and that we are not dealing with a Bashir-like regime anymore. And I think this is – this is my plea, and I’m happy that Senator Van Hollen has the same views and ideas. And we would welcome, of course, using U.S. assets in this respect, and whatever additional assistance can be given to us will be most appreciated.

On regional issues, let me say, well, basic facts and principles. Ethiopia is a country which is very close to Sudan. The Ethiopian people are very close to Sudan. We have strong links, appreciation, and strong, you know, feelings with – between the two peoples. And it is – I would say it is abnormal that Ethiopia and Sudan be fighting.

A few years ago, we have been talking about integration between Ethiopia and Sudan, and for that matter integration within the wider IGAD region. And these ideas are still there and they need to be pursued. But of course, now we have issues that we need to settle between the two countries.

We have the issue of GERD that should not have been an issue in the first place, because Sudan supported the construction of GERD and we made, actually, I will say, a symbolic contribution to its construction, a few million dollars at the beginning. So, we are not against GERD in principle, but we are against the position that Ethiopia has taken unilaterally in imposing certain facts on the ground, and this is not acceptable.

We would like Ethiopia to be more understanding to the needs of the Sudanese people, to the – we are conscious of the benefits, the huge benefits of that. Sudan – well, some people are saying maybe Sudan will benefit from
it more than Ethiopia, which could – I’m not an expert, but that’s what I’m hearing. But of course, at the same time, we want to, you know, alleviate and we want to remove any threats that this dam, huge dam, can constitute to our safety and livelihoods of our people. That’s all that we are asking. We’re asking for an agreement – an agreement – a mutually agreed, you know, plan for the management and filling of the dam. We are not asking any more, and I think this is very simple. This can be done.

And we continue adhering to the African process, AU-led process. And we would like that to continue, provided that it is being energized, reactivated, reinforced. And we appreciate the assistance that United States and other partners are doing in this respect.

And concerning the Fashaga, it’s actually a very clear matter to us. Agreements have been signed in the past, beginning in colonial times, between the two countries. Whether we like it or not, those agreements have been endorsed by the whole AU, the Organization of African Unity, at its inception in 1963, ’64, and we adhere to them. And we are against changing, you know, borders of countries just because one country or the other, one sees the need to do it. And we are ready to negotiate today with Ethiopia, if the Ethiopians accept to negotiate and talk about what can be done. In that respect, we are ready to do it, even today.

We are concerned, of course, about the – you know, the internal situation in Ethiopia – naturally, because it affects us. Ethiopia has been – since 1972 and 2019 they assisted us with our own problems. And we do not understand why Ethiopia refuses that Sudan help them out with their own problems, particularly that now Sudan is leading IGAD and Ethiopia has been leading IGAD for over a decade. So we do not understand why they are reluctant to accept a friendly and amicable role for Sudan just to help them out, as they have helped us – continued to help us for a very long time. I do not understand this position based on – as a friend of Ethiopia, somebody who worked in Ethiopia representing UNESCO and have been working on this issue for over four decades in that region.

So my plea here to our Ethiopian brother and sisters: Please let Sudan – come to terms with Sudan on those issues. Do not complicate matters. You cannot live alone in this. And we are – we have genuine concerns for the stability of Ethiopia, not only because this is spilling over on Sudan but also because we are genuinely concerned for the Ethiopian people themselves. We consider them at same level of the Sudanese people because we believe in African unity and we need regional integration. And we would like this to be done, and I hope that very soon they would allow IGAD to do its job and to allow bilateral relation between Sudan and Ethiopia to be improved in such a way that we can talk to each other in a constructive manner.
Judd Devermont: Ambassador – excuse me, Senator Van Hollen, Ambassador Satti says it’s abnormal for Sudan and Ethiopia to fight. I think we can all hear this concern his voice – his plea for there to be consultation around the dam, to resolve the challenges that Ethiopia’s civil war has provided or made for Ethiopia. Can you talk a little bit from your perspective, how does Congress, in partnership with the Biden administration – and of course, Special Envoy Jeff Feltman – work for peace in these very delicate security challenges?

Chris Van Hollen: Right. And, look, I share the ambassador’s view. And I really appreciate the frame in which he’s sort of put these issues, because it is very true that, you know, the people of Sudan and Ethiopia have far more to benefit from, you know, cooperation than they do from any kind of conflict. You know, I want – we were talking about the economy. You know, Sudan, of course, has a huge agricultural sector, but it could become much more productive. And that could be a great benefit, not just to Sudan but the kind of, you know, regional economic cooperation the ambassador’s talking about, more transportation links, more integration so that more goods could be exported. That, obviously, is very difficult when you have this raging conflict in the Tigray region and other places.

And so the United States and the Biden administration have been very focused on, you know, trying to resolve the dispute in Ethiopia and to help Sudan and others with, you know, the immediate refugee crisis. We talked about 63,000 Ethiopian refugees from the Tigray region there. So I know Ambassador Feltman has been, you know, working hard through shuttle diplomacy. The issue of what was happening in Ethiopia was also front and center during the trip that I took with Senator Coons. He, Senator Coons, had taken a prior trip to Ethiopia as well. So this is one of those areas where active diplomacy, I hope, can make a difference.

And with respect to the GERD, I also appreciate the, you know, ambassador’s tone there, because it’s true. Based on everything we heard, including from the minister of, you know, irrigation and agriculture, Sudan can benefit in some ways from the GERD, reducing flooding and helping that great agricultural sector that I talked about with, you know, more stable and predictable, less uncertain supplies of water. And so that’s another area.

And, you know, the ambassador said that, you know, Sudan doesn’t object to the GERD. It just wants some clear understanding of, you know, what’s going to happen.

With regard to the al-Fashaga region, I agree with the ambassador that that issue has been previously litigated and resolved as a matter of international law. And as you know, Sudan had essentially a – I don’t know if it’s written or unwritten agreement with Ethiopia, and the Amhara farmers have continued to be able to farm that land productively, which is just another example of why it’s in everybody’s best interests to both resolve the conflict in Ethiopia
and the issues around the GERD. And, again, Ambassador Feltman has, you know, been in regular communication with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And, you know, we look forward to his continued diplomacy in the region.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Senator. Forty-five minutes goes very quickly when you're talking about a country as complex as Sudan. I feel like we've only been able to scratch the surface. We didn't - weren't able to talk about the massacre in Khartoum and accountability or really sort of walk through some of the challenges with the election. But I would like to give first you, Ambassador, and the senator just a chance for a closing one-minute remark before we wrap up today's event.

So, Ambassador Satti, let me have you go first.

Nureldin Satti: Well, thank you very much, Judd. And once again, let me thank you, your team, and CSIS for having organized this important event. And how grateful I am to be in the company of Senator Van Hollen who – and we share the same ideas about issues, as always. And he also – in conclusion, I would like to express also our thanks and appreciation to Congress, to Senate, to the administration and to Ambassador Feltman and his team for the wonderful work that they are doing, and to say that the U.S. and Sudan are working closely on regional issues in order to see how we can work together to resolve those issues. We are thankful for that.

Thank you very much.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Ambassador.

Senator Van Hollen?

Chris Van Hollen: Well, it's wonderful to be here with Ambassador Satti. And you know, I think this conversation is an example of how we need to further deepen, you know, the partnership between Sudan and the United States – the people of Sudan and the United States in this push. Very exciting time of transition to democracy, which has got a lot of promise but as we've said a lot of peril as well. And thank you, Judd, and your team at CSIS, for bringing us together to discuss these issues.

And, look, there's – there are not a lot of bright spots around the world these days. This is a period of time where we've seen a reversal of gains that have been made in terms of democracy and human rights and freedom of the press in so many parts of the world. So we should be doing everything we can to support one of these bright spots, and nurture it, and provide it with oxygen, and do everything we can, because this story is not yet fully written
and we all need to do our part to maximize the chances that it has a happy ending.

Judd Devermont: Sir, I couldn’t agree more. I want to thank you and Ambassador Satti for your leadership and for continuing to deepen our bilateral ties. This country and its transition has to be a priority for our government, for the American people. Getting Sudan right and its transition right is going to be transformative for a region that is so important to our national security interests.

And so this won’t be the last conversation we have here at CSIS. You’re welcome – I encourage our audience to look at our – what we’ve written so far and conversations we regularly have on our podcasts. And I hope to hear more from Ambassador Satti and Senator Van Hollen on this issue as the situation develops.

So, thanks to both of you and thanks to everyone for watching today.

Nureldin Satti: Thank you very much. Thank you.

(End.)