

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent federal agency advising the Administration and Congress, wrote January 18 to the President's special envoy to Sudan, former Sen. John Danforth, who has just returned from meeting with the government and opposition in that country. The Commission congratulated Senator Danforth on the progress achieved in confidence-building measures between the warring parties and urged him "to press Khartoum to demonstrate good faith commitment to both peace negotiations ... as well as to significant improvement in policies and conditions of religious freedom...."

The text of the letter follows:

January 18, 2002

Dear Senator Danforth,

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) wishes to congratulate you on the reported progress you have achieved on most of the confidence-building measures you laid down for the Government of Sudan and the opposition movement.

In its letter to you of October 2, 2001, the Commission offered four recommendations to guide your negotiations with the Government of Sudan. A copy of the letter with attachment is enclosed. Several of these recommendations were included in your four confidence-building measures. The Commission particularly encourages you in future discussions to press

Khartoum to demonstrate good faith commitment to both peace negotiations under the IGAD Declaration of Principles as well as to significant improvement in policies and conditions of religious freedom (recommendations 3 and 4, respectively), as the Commission has found that religion plays a major part in the war. The Administration thereby will address not only the symptoms but the disease as well. The Commission believes attention to all four points is essential to any long-term solution.

The Commission appreciates your efforts, wishes you continued success, and requests an opportunity to discuss these matters with you further at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Young

Chair

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael K. Young

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