

**Sudan Civil Society Forum  
Oslo, 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

**STATEMENT**

The Sudanese Civil Society Forum brought together more than seventy representatives from Sudanese civil society working in different regions of Sudan and the Diaspora, along with representatives of international non-governmental organisations working in Sudan, at a meeting in Oslo from 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

We, the participants, sincerely thank the Government of Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the United Nations, the Troika, and the international community in general, for their great achievement in bringing about the signing of the historic Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) for Sudan on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005. We urge them to continue their commitment to the full implementation of the CPA.

We, for our part, pledge that Sudanese civil society will play a full, active and independent role in supporting the implementation of the CPA as watchdogs, advocates, and actors. We recognise this as our duty whilst also claiming it as our right.

We express our deep concern about the ongoing suffering and violence throughout Sudan, in areas such as Darfur where no peace agreement is in sight as well as in the South where a peace agreement has been signed. The continuation of the Darfur conflict, as well as inflicting immense suffering on the people of Darfur, will endanger peace throughout Sudan, where suffering and violence have been endemic for so many decades. We urge all parties to concentrate on bringing an immediate end to this conflict in the interest not only of the people of Darfur but indeed of all the people of Sudan.

We, the participants of the Oslo meeting, have looked into the current situation in the Sudan (North and South), and have reached the conclusion that the political, social and economic atmosphere is not conducive to the transformation of the country into a democratic society. There is an urgent need for legislative and legal reforms in order to pave the way for a real and true transformation into a democratic society and democratic state which respects the diversity of the society.

We have shown our concern about the existence of the state of emergency and other repressive laws and acts, such as the National Security Act. Furthermore, the policies and practice of many law enforcement organs are lacking respect of law, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. Human rights are grossly and continuously violated. There is serious abuse of power.

Fundamental and basic rights of the people are not observed and protected by State organs. The Right to Life and Well-being, Freedom of Expression, the Media, Assembly, Association, Thought, Belief, Security and Civil Protection and the Right to Freedom from Poverty are basic rights that are continuously infringed and violated.

Furthermore, the civil society was not adequately consulted or informed during the process of the peace negotiation and JAM.

The civil society role has been marginalised. The funding modality, in particular, to the civil society has been neglected.

There are many threats in different areas due to lack of education, protection, security, information, and lack of services. Gender inequality continues to hamper the development of a free, fair and peaceful society.

We observe that the JAM report under-estimated the role of the civil society. It calls on civil society to do a great deal, working in partnership with the state actors in post-conflict Sudan, but gives little institutional and financial support.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

For a real sustainable and lasting peace in the Sudan, we strongly recommend the following:

1. An immediate consultative process to overhaul and reform the legal system, to repeal all restrictive, repressive, discriminatory and freedom-curtailling laws in the Sudan. These should include Emergency Decrees and all laws relating to freedom of expression, assembly, association and women's and children's rights. Freedom of the press must be guaranteed. All international conventions must be ratified and fully adopted, particularly Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention Against Torture.
2. Inclusion and consultations with civil society in all constitutional and decision-making processes including the National Law Review Commission, National Petroleum Commission and other relevant commissions. A meaningful space for civil society must be created, sustained and protected.
3. The Multi-Donors Trust Funds (MDTF) mechanism risks disempowering civil society. Civil society must have a formal role in the management and disbursement of the MDTF, and also have access to funding independently of government structures.
4. Technical and professional training and institutional development support for civil society organizations to enable them to assume their full role in rebuilding the Sudan
5. The immediate respect and adherence to the rule of law and order by all. No one is above the law. All instruments of the law, especially the Judiciary to be empowered to ensure individuals' freedoms and for justice to prevail. An empowered independent judiciary is the keystone for protection of people's rights.
6. An immediate transformation from military to civilian rule. This should happen through open and transparent mechanisms that are consultative with civil society and community groups.
7. An immediate support for a nation-wide emergence of a culture of peace, justice, truth and reconciliation. This can be done through the establishment of truth and reconciliation processes, tribunals, an institutional Ombudsman among others. Civil society must have a strong voice in determining what type

of justice and reconciliation process is adopted and in implementation. Accountability and impunity must also be addressed in the face of crimes against humanity, rape, ethnic cleansing, torture and other human rights abuses.

8. The on-going efforts of civil society and faith-based organizations and groups towards peace and development must be fully supported. Post-conflict reconstruction must be comprehensive and include all groups including the Diaspora. Civic education, literacy and awareness-raising are important components of peace-building. A national commission must be set up for reforming the education system and curriculum, and civil society must be involved.
9. Zero tolerance of corruption must be implemented through civil society and state actors and mechanisms, including an independent commission to prevent and curb corruption. Stringent mechanisms must be set up to safeguard the economy of Sudan.
10. On-going and potential conflicts and threats to peace (including Darfur, the East, Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western and Southern Kordofan), particularly where state actors are continuing to support armed militia, must be openly challenged by all stakeholders including civil society groups and must be conclusively resolved. Foreign groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army must be stopped.
11. Guarantees by the UN Security Council and AU must be put in place. All UN resolutions relevant to Sudan must be fully respected to ensure peace sustainability. Conditionalities and benchmarks must be established and the UN and international community must be prepared to respond to breaches and failure to comply. UN and AU peace-keeping forces must be culturally and gender sensitive and must work together with civil society.

We, the representatives of civil society organizations, hereby truthfully and genuinely recommend that, above all, there needs to be a genuine political will to bring about peace and justice to the Sudan. Both the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army have to openly manifest to us all that they can deliver peace to the people of Sudan NOW. Furthermore, we urge the international community to continue its relentless efforts towards a lasting, just peace and democracy in the Sudan by continuing its support to achieve this together with the governments, civil society and the people of the Sudan.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity and for listening to us.