Darfur: Towards a New Strategy for Achieving Comprehensive Peace, Security and Development

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Darfur has been altered by new dynamics, which present a challenge as well as an opportunity to secure peace through a sophisticated and well coordinated effort. Such an approach will focus not only on negotiations, but also on a broad developmental program and consultations that will incorporate the concerns of the Darfur community, helping lead to a comprehensive, sustainable and forward-thinking resolution.

The situation in Darfur is at present exacerbated by the fragmentation and proliferation of rebel groups, reflected in a parallel division of civil society. The endemic fragmentation of armed groups and their increased intransigence, coupled with a general hardening of positions among all armed and civil actors in Darfur, has made it extremely difficult for belligerents to agree on a united position for their demands. In this atmosphere, rebel groups and other factions compete against each other over who is more hard-line, complicating negotiations with the Government.

Overall, the pattern of violence in Darfur has shifted to a low-intensity insurgency, often fading into criminal activity. Pockets of insecurity continue, mostly as a result of banditry and rebel factions' refusal to uphold a ceasefire. There was a transient rise in violence in Darfur during May 2010 due to a breakdown of the ceasefire agreements between JEM and the Government. In view of this, it is clear that signed agreements with armed rebel movements are not in themselves sufficient to resolve security problems. It has become necessary to not only be concerned with appeasing fragmented rebel factions, but to adopt a radically new approach to Darfur that deals with the root causes of insecurity.

The humanitarian needs of the vulnerable sections of Darfur’s population also remain a priority; the Government continues its constant efforts to meet humanitarian needs in coordination with UNAMID and international partners. Nevertheless, the persistent insecurity, ecological threats, and volatile political and local situations continue to threaten aid deliveries and generate new humanitarian crises. It is, therefore, vital to re-orient humanitarian activity in Darfur towards the resettlement of the people affected by the conflict, providing security for them in their original homes and sufficient help to enable self-reliance.

Regional participation remains crucial in achieving peace in Darfur, as the conflict could neither have been initiated nor sustained without significant regional input. The Government continues to be concerned over the tendency of some countries in the region to interfere with the peace process, despite their perhaps good intentions. We continue to seek the cooperation of neighbors, hoping to emulate the improvement of bilateral relations with Chad, which has had a positive impact on reducing the levels of violent conflict in Darfur.
The international community has also sent conflicting messages, with support for peace on one hand and the extreme rhetoric of demonization on the other (for example, through the immoderate, unjustified antics of the ICC and some extremist advocacy groups). The relevant governments have been unable to send an unequivocal message in support of peace and compromise. As a result, misinformation about the situation in Darfur has been allowed to go unchallenged, negatively affecting both perceptions and policy.

In support of peace, the Doha process has provided a viable and internationally supported forum for negotiations between the Government and rebel groups and brought attention to regional and international efforts to resolve the conflict in Darfur. As an initiative by the State of Qatar, it is supported by the Arab League, the African Union and the United Nations, and is led jointly by the Qatari government and the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator. The Doha forum continues to be the only agreed venue for negotiations between the Government and Darfur rebel groups. It has faced numerous obstacles over the past year: rivalry between regional actors, limitations on the mediation process and the ongoing fragmentation of rebel groups continue to hinder the peace process, which at this point must be accelerated to make up for lost time. In order to make the process more inclusive, the Doha mediation has initiated a worthy consultation with civil society that should be complemented by a systematic, internal process.

Another significant development since the elections in April is the emergence of electorally empowered representatives for various opinions and interests in Darfur. These representatives enjoy important powers in parliaments and the regional and federal governments, and are not only able to voice the demands of the diverse communities in Darfur, but are also empowered to take action to respond to these concerns. The elected representatives genuinely reflect the diversity of Darfur’s population and should be engaged in the peace process in a significant way.

UNAMID’s establishment and deployment as a unique joint AU-UN mission has had a positive role in promoting security and it continues to make constructive contributions. We believe that UNAMID has still more to offer and should evolve to its greatest potential towards promoting peace, reconciliation and development.

Further AU initiatives, the AU High Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD) and the AU High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), both headed by President Thabo Mbeki, were established to assist in addressing issues of peace and stability in Darfur and Sudan as a whole. The Government has welcomed these contributions and is ready to continue its engagement with both panels, which have generated constructive proposals in their helpful reports and other output.

In light of all these developments, the Government recognizes the necessity of devising a new, more effective and more realistic strategy for bringing about peace, security and stability in Darfur. The Government understands that this task is in the end its primary responsibility as the sovereign Government of the country, and will take the lead in proposing and implementing the requisite policy to achieve these goals. It naturally welcomes any constructive contribution from regional and international partners, taking into consideration that the present situation presents both a challenge and an opportunity for all stakeholders to reach a comprehensive
agreement recognized and supported by the international community. Previous agreements and consultations provide a basis for this final phase of the peace process, while continued support from all partners and the development of new initiatives responding to realities on the ground shall help conclude the Darfur political process.

Without oversimplifying the causes or desired solutions to the conflict, the Government proposes to peacefully resolve the situation through efforts focused on five main elements: security, development, resettlement, reconciliation, and negotiations. As such, a comprehensive political process shall seek to address the causes of the conflict, including development, ecological degradation, arms flows, and political grievances such as inclusion and equitable wealth distribution. It will also address the manifestations of the conflict, namely insecurity, displacement, and fragmentation among the Darfur community and rebel movements. This shall be done jointly with its partners and with the Darfur population.

It is worth noting that the most pressing issue in Sudan for the next several months will be the referendum on self-determination in the South. While the referendum tends to be treated as a separate issue, it will have implications on Darfur, threatening to derail the Darfur peace process. As the North and South pursue negotiations on post-referendum issues, Darfur may be a source of tension; likewise, tense negotiations between the North and South will likely complicate a resolution in Darfur.

**OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES**

The Government of Sudan’s central objective is an inclusive, comprehensive political settlement for Darfur; such an agreement will help restore normalcy and accelerate development in the region. Our priority is to re-establish security for all people, provide assurances and incentives for displaced populations to return home, and offer substantial developmental support in their original habitats. To achieve these primary objectives, a number of coordinated strategies will be adopted, including:

- Domestication of the Darfur political process. This will allow a wider spectrum of society to participate, ensuring the sustainability of a final solution. Since an internal political process would mobilize representatives from all social and political forces within Darfur itself, such a shift will encourage local actors to lead in the search for a peaceful ending. A domestic process would also ensure a viable resolution by bringing a solution closer to the specific causes and consequences of the Darfur conflict, including those identified in consultations.

- Enhancing security on the ground through joint measures with UNAMID. Initiatives to eliminate sources of insecurity involve combating banditry and other lawless behavior, working to restore confidence between the population and the security forces, and the deployment of community police where needed.

- Accelerating the voluntary, safe, sustainable resettlement of IDPs and the repatriation of refugees while providing both populations with all necessary
support. In addition, making available resources necessary to guarantee livelihood for nomads.

- Unilateral actions to implement developmental and political projects on the ground. Working with local communities to devise and implement these projects should contribute significantly to equitable development in the region.

- Working closely with UNAMID, the Joint Mediator and the AUHIP to facilitate consultations among the communities in Darfur. Such dialogue will enable all sections of opinion to voice their concerns and address the root causes of the crisis.

- Implementing justice through national mechanisms and in close consultation with all Darfur communities. This should include securing compensation and restitution for victims in a spirit of fairness and reconciliation.

- Reorienting humanitarian operations to shift the focus from relief to long-term development.

- Mobilizing regional and international support to consolidate gains made in the peace process and support any future agreements.

- Promoting reconciliation amongst the Darfur communities by making use of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and restoring harmony and cooperation to all segments of society.

- Working with all partners to successfully conclude a final and comprehensive Global Political Agreement based on consultations with the Darfur community and past negotiations

**Re-orienting the Peace Process**

In consideration of the objectives outlined above, the peace process requires a radical re-orientation to take into account emerging challenges and opportunities regarding the conflict in Darfur. Since it is not seen as possible to have sustainable peace without including those who might not be directly involved in the conflict, but have nonetheless suffered as a result, the Darfur peace and political processes shall be domesticated to engage the real victims and peacemakers in Darfur, with the Government of Sudan leading as the main stakeholder of peace.

The Doha forum will remain the only agreed venue for Darfur negotiations, with adaptations intended to overcome problems that have posed themselves in recent months, namely the continuing fragmentation of Darfur belligerents and the changeability of rebel movements’ positions.

To this end, the Government and its partners envisage a shift in the negotiations’ center of gravity towards an internal course of action, meant to allow full participation by the people of Darfur. The Government will encourage mediation to establish a Darfur Consultation Forum (DCF) to complement the negotiations, allowing
stakeholders to better address the Darfur community’s needs by providing a venue for them to voice their concerns. By doing so, the final political agreement will be shaped by those directly affected by the conflict; not only will this make it possible to consolidate all that has been achieved on Darfur, but it will elevate the concerns of the Darfur communities while filtering out any destabilizing external engagement.

This shift should not be misread as an attempt to exclude external partners from the political process, but as a necessary step to bring their engagement closer to the actual stakeholders in Darfur. The Government will converge the Doha forum with other current initiatives, including those of the AUHIP and UNAMID, to achieve this goal.

The Doha mediators, in restructuring the negotiating process, shall set up the DCF to feed into the Doha negotiations. Input should help the parties there produce, with the support of the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator, a Global Political Agreement that is final, comprehensive and inclusive of wide-ranging concerns. The DCF, since it shall enable non-belligerent elements of the Darfur community to participate in negotiations, will set conditions for a sustainable and satisfactory end to the conflict.

The ultimate goal of negotiations shall be to draft a Global Political Agreement (GPA) that will address to the various concerns of the stakeholders of Darfur. All parties to the Darfur conflict, including armed belligerents, should then be invited to sign the Global Political Agreement and participate in the comprehensive initiative to resolve the conflict by addressing the causes and consequences of the conflict.

The Global Political Agreement shall include a ceasefire and address security arrangements, reconciliation, power sharing and wealth sharing as well as other concerns as identified by the Darfur communities through the DCF. Such an agreement should be upheld by internal institutions and non-state actors in Darfur, supported by the international community and protected from spoilers by the UN, the AU and other institutions. Partners should uphold the importance of negotiations in identifying issues that need to be resolved, developing ideas on programs and processes to do so, and conclusively and equitably addressing all stakeholders’ concerns.

**COMMITMENT TO PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS**

The Government, while working seriously on negotiating a final arrangement, will remain committed to upholding and implementing all previously signed agreements, particularly with regard to security, integration and political participation. There should be no conflict between any arrangement that may result from ongoing Doha negotiations and these prior commitments.

The aim of pursuing multiple tracks for peacemaking is to include all Darfur groups in an overarching and mutually accepted political framework.

In addition to signed agreements, the Government reiterates its commitment to the Sudan People’s Initiative as representative of the views of the majority of Sudanese people. As such, we will seek to incorporate it in laying groundwork for the Darfur Consultation Forum.
SECURITY

The provision of security is the primary responsibility and specific function of the sovereign state. The Government will take proactive and decisive action to provide security for all citizens in Darfur, and will depend on UNAMID, in cooperation with our international partners, to fully collaborate in line with their mandate. To address the various root causes of insecurity in Darfur, the following steps will be implemented:

a) A detailed security strategy that privileges stabilization, peace consolidation and recovery shall be finalized in full cooperation with elected local administrations and all stakeholders in Darfur.

b) Preventive measures shall be identified and implemented to curb insecurity and stabilize the region.

c) Measures similar to the security agreement between Sudan and Chad should be worked out with key neighbors to restrict the movement of arms and armed groups, thus guarding against new sources of instability.

d) The Government shall pursue concurrent disarmament of all armed groups in Darfur as part of its comprehensive peace building strategy.

e) With special attention to IDPs, the protection of civilians shall be handled jointly in cooperation with UNAMID’s ongoing operations.

f) The Government will work to protect all the people of Darfur against armed groups by strengthening the general capacity of state security organs, enhancing border monitoring mechanisms, negotiating ceasefires with all amenable belligerents and finalizing reintegration of DPA and DoC signatories’ troops into the Sudan Armed Forces.

g) The implementation of security measures at all stages will include consultations with Government partners, during which appropriate assistance will be welcome.

RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE

Justice and reconciliation in Darfur are key to preventing a future return to conflict. The Darfur consultations will be the ideal forum for addressing issues of justice and reconciliation, as the process should be owned by the communities or Darfur and tackle the root causes of the conflict while also dealing with the mistrust afflicting its population.

The Government will thus set up new forums of reconciliation while working to strengthen existing mechanisms, taking into consideration the traditional means of conflict resolution that have historically served Darfur. We will mobilize the role of local elected officials to promote and enhance these efforts.
The Government will work to implement fair compensation schemes for communities affected by the conflict in Darfur, utilizing existing compensation funds and supplementing them as necessary.

In addition, the Government recognizes the psychological and practical importance of justice and, as such, remains committed to supporting the work of the appointed special prosecutor for Darfur and related national tribunals to impartially carry out their mandates.

**FROM RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT**

Humanitarian relief in Darfur has been necessitated by the emergency of mass displacement. Relief, however, by definition can only be a temporary measure, not a permanent feature of life. It is therefore a top priority for the Government to re-orient humanitarian relief towards indigenization and shift efforts from dependency towards development and self-reliance for the people of Darfur.

The Government, while continuing to adhere to universally accepted humanitarian principles, shall ensure that the full humanitarian needs of the Darfur population are met by filling any gaps and facilitating access of humanitarian organizations to secure regions of Darfur. The relationship between the Government and NGOs operating in Darfur should be strengthened through goodwill, effective cooperation and joint efforts to help the local population while safeguarding its dignity and self-reliance.

To this end, the voluntary, safe and orderly return of displaced people to their homes should be upheld as the ultimate indicator of a successful resolution to the Darfur conflict. Organizing such a return is one of the Government’s top priorities. To achieve this, we will undertake joint efforts with UNAMID and other partners to provide security and basic services for IDPs and refugees in their original homes. In turn, this will enable stakeholders to commence planned development projects that guarantee livelihoods and essential needs for nomads, IDPs and refugees.

A major development drive for Darfur is being planned to provide basic services, halt and reverse environmental degradation, and lay the foundation for long-term prosperity that will address Darfur’s historically inadequate infrastructure. Real development can only come with peace, but the Government will commence work on projects in areas of Darfur which have been secured; this includes planning, preparing, and securing funds from domestic and international sources. Special attention will be paid to creating an environment that allows resettlement and repatriation of IDPs, refugees and nomads.

Development will go hand in hand with building the capacity of Darfur’s civil service to better serve communities and bolster their security. Capacity-building will be enhanced by including non-state actors as well as encouraging the involvement of legislative and executive institutions at all levels.

**ADJUSTING PERCEPTIONS AND REALITY**

The situation in Darfur has been exacerbated by the sometimes willful misrepresentation of the conflict. Coupled with the propaganda of some belligerent
groups, this continues to fan the flames of conflict and obstruct the search for peace. It is thus essential, in order to advance the peace process, to bring perceptions of the conflict in line with reality and try to promote positive mutual perceptions between Darfur’s various communities. All those involved, including partners, relief or media personnel, and other observers, should try to reflect reality as it is and refrain from misrepresenting the realities, disseminating inaccurate information, or inciting hatred and dissent between various elements in Darfur. More precisely, all interested parties should privilege reports on the Darfur sourced from credible entities on the ground, for example UNAMID.

We rely on our international partners to cooperate in this regard, actively promoting a constructive and positive approach that encourages dialogue between various components of Darfur society while discouraging polarizing and dishonest views. Stakeholders have the responsibility to seek and spread credible, accurate information on all issues related to Darfur.

**The Role of Partners**

The Government encourages external partners, whether countries or organizations, to constructively support a political process that recognizes the centrality of Sudanese ownership to a sustainable solution. The involvement of all domestic, regional and international partners will ultimately be judged according to the best interests of the people of Darfur.

**UNAMID**

The Government commends UNAMID for its essential role in stabilizing Darfur. It recognizes UNAMID as a unique partner for implementing and realizing security, political, humanitarian and developmental initiatives.

UNAMID continues to have a productive working relationship with the Government, which should be channeled to review the successes of the mission as well as areas where it might be improved. UNAMID shall be a primary partner in the new security strategy to further enhance the safety of civilians without prejudice to the sovereign obligations of the Government. And, as a compliment to the Doha forum, UNAMID shall support the political process through its services and expertise on the ground in Darfur.

UNAMID, in coordination with relevant agencies, should strive to use its assets to promote recovery and development in Darfur. We count on UNAMID and other partners to take a decisive role in the ambitious shift from relief to development operations in Darfur; it is necessary to move away from a policy that enables the status quo to a more proactive and bold approach that overcomes any obstacles delaying security provisions in areas around Darfur.

**The African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD) and The AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP)**

The Government acknowledges the significant contributions of the AUPD and the AUHIP to the Darfur political process, recognizing the two panels’ demonstrated expertise, credibility, and goodwill. The AUPD recommendations for unilateral
Government actions on security, resettlement, and compensation – all of which form important pillars in the new Darfur strategy – are fully in line with national policy. Moreover, the AUHIP is in a distinct position to mediate with both regional and international stakeholders in the interest of the Darfur political process.

Considering its contributions, the Government shall continue to strengthen and broaden its relationship with the AUHIP in seeking a final conclusion to the Darfur conflict. Together with UNAMID, the AUHIP will have an appropriately significant role in coordinating and convening the Darfur Consultation Forum.

**OTHER PARTNERS**

International and regional partners have an important role to play. The Government of Sudan will count on the AU, the UN, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to continue their constructive involvement and redouble efforts to overcome the remaining obstacles to peace. Qatar’s commendable role in hosting and coordinating the Doha Forum should continue, and be enhanced and supplemented with other mechanisms. Other regional partners are expected to play a more constructive role in achieving peace while avoiding unhelpful or harmful interventions.

The international community as a whole has spotlighted Darfur, but its contribution to a positive resolution remains limited and many of its actions, such as the interventionism of the ICC and other belligerent actors, have been more harmful than helpful. For the international community to play a more constructive role within the context of the new strategy, a major shift is needed in international attitudes and roles. There is need for a shift from a confrontational, obstructionist attitude towards a more constructive and cooperative one.

One example where a shift in outlook would make a tremendous contribution is cooperation in refocusing from relief to development. At present, hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent on maintaining the developmental status quo in Darfur, whether assisting IDPs or maintaining international agencies and NGOs. Meanwhile, one of the crucial issues needing resolution is that of compensation and resettlement. Were international donors to pledge funds at their current spending levels to the compensation and resettlement fund being set up by the Government, this could significantly encourage Darfur communities to accept speedier resettlement, thereby helping to definitively resolve the conflict much more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Detailed implementation plans to fully realize the commitments of this strategy are currently being developed. Once discussions with partners and government institutions are completed, it will be possible to begin taking practical and measurable steps on the ground.

Sudanese national institutions, agencies, and mechanisms will be initiated as necessary to implement the present strategy. The Government will ensure proper
implementation of the strategy and its adherence by all levels of authority, down to
the local level.

In its commitment to leadership, the Government will implement unilateral actions
where appropriate. In particular, we are committed to helping set up the Darfur
Consultation Forum (DCF) and all stabilization, security and development initiatives.

Non-state actors and other partners who accept this strategy will be invited to form a
partnership for its implementation.

The present strategy will be subject to continual review, including adjustments as
appropriate to the situation in Darfur.

**TIMEFRAME**

All stakeholders in Darfur should commit to a deadline for reaching a peace
agreement, agreeing on a timeframe for resettlement, repatriation and any similar
operations enshrined in the future political agreement.

Timeframes should privilege the signing of a Global Political Agreement and the
initiation of critical projects well before the January 2011 referendum on self-
determination in the South.