

The Sudanese Peace Process

Darwin College, Cambridge, UK, 9 February 2004

Concordis International facilitated this consultation which brought 26 UK-based Sudanese from diverse backgrounds, representing a comprehensive range of key Sudanese constituencies, aided by two international experts. Five presentations were given by Sudanese participants on the progress of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) process and issues still to be resolved, conflict areas not being addressed by IGAD and priorities for implementation of the IGAD agreement. There was vigorous, frank and informed discussion of each area.

Participants noted that despite progress in the negotiations, IGAD still needed to resolve a number of important issues, including the structure and process of the security framework in the country, the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of the process, the issues of land reform, restitution and human rights, gender issues and the involvement of women in the peace process. The issue of inclusiveness was seen as especially important, and the participants agreed that IGAD had a very limited platform for a very diverse country. They stressed the need for a broader platform to involve the excluded parties and that, when decisions are reached in Machakos, they should not be imposed on the other regions without clarification and consultation. Furthermore, the other regions should be able to share in wealth, have the same rights (as given by any IGAD agreement to the North and South, as well as the option for them to establish their own structures and institutions. The participants agreed that the peace agreement must not only be a bilateral agreement and the two parties must find ways to accommodate the interests of others.

Participants recognized that the signing of a peace agreement alone would not bring peace to Sudan, and therefore felt that one of the most important issues to be addressed is the implementation process, including the cementing of peace within the population. They also emphasized that the signing of a North-South peace agreement would not end conflicts in other areas of Sudan; these conflicts must be dealt with. Also, if people are to feel that they own and benefit from a future peace they must be consulted during the peace process.

Participants highlighted that in dealing with the Sudanese conflict, one should not ignore international influences, which are directed at sustaining or resolving the conflict. Participants noted that international factors, such as the failures that surrounded the war against Iraq and international efforts aimed at peaceful resolutions of conflicts, were impacting the negotiations. They acknowledged that there must be international involvement in the process of implementation, including an internationally backed follow-up dialogue that will set up a timetable and targets with dispute settlement mechanisms.

The participants explored many other issues which they felt needed to be addressed including: accountability (possibly including a truth and reconciliation commission), gender, social rehabilitation following the signing of the peace agreement, and repatriation for IDPs and those affected by the conflict. Regarding these issues, the participants felt that Concordis could help the Sudanese people in many ways: facilitating consultations on social and corporate responsibility with oil companies, examining the issue of IDPs and refugees, facilitating training on entrepreneurship, helping with the organisation of regional economic conferences, holding meetings on land utilisation and banking and running consultations on the marginalised areas. They agreed that Concordis should continue sending reports of its meetings to the Sudanese constituencies, foreign governments and international organisations.

Although this meeting only lasted one day and so was not able to cover the many issues raised in depth, the Sudanese participants agreed that it had provided them with an opportunity to engage in frank and positive dialogue. They recognised the potential for achieving consensus on the issues and felt that there were a number of ways in which Concordis International could support peace-building and post-conflict nation-building further. There was a general desire for such meetings to continue as soon as possible, so as not to lose momentum.

