

SAS/Remarks – Tuesday 18 March 2008

OPENING REMARKS BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM AT THE MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

1. I wish to join UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson in welcoming you all to this meeting. I particularly wish to welcome those of our friends and colleagues who are attending these consultations for the first time.

- Appreciation

2. This being our first meeting after the Sirte meeting, I wish to express our appreciation and gratitude for the efforts of the International Observers during and after leaving the Sirte Peace Process last October 2007. Your strong statements of support provided the momentum for the launching of the Process in Sirte. We certainly look forward to a continued and even more dynamic involvement of the International Community ----- in particular all the countries represented here in support of the Peace Process.

3. Today's meeting is intended to appraise you of the efforts so far made. The challenge encountered so that together we can decide the way forward.

- The Challenges facing us:

4. As we do so, it is important to bear in mind the following factors relating to the situation in Darfur.

- Security situation is the most urgent problem in Darfur

- The Security situation has continued to deteriorate. Not only have witnessed more casualties, and more displacements as a result of the continued insecurity but also an escalation of action perpetrated against civilians by all sorts of criminal elements who seem in some cases to end with impunity, the need to put an end to this insecurity and end an atmosphere of heartlessness cannot be over emphasized.

- The escalation of the faction in Western Darfur is particularly regrettable.

- In order to contribute effectively to ending a state of insecurity there has been great and understandable expectation on the deployment of the AU/UN Hybrid Force. It is therefore a matter of important urgent that such a deployment has been painfully slow facing numerous impediments – some created by the position of the Government of Sudan and some due to the failure of the International Community to act decisively. We all recognize that what is needed in Darfur is a Robust, well equipped Force which has --- reasonable mobile capacity. I believe it is a sad commentary that given the prevented of thousand of helicopters it has not been possible ----- to provide the very limited number required by the Force. And yet all the countries represented here as well as the larger International Community have repeatedly stressed the importance of a rapid deployment of a Robust UNAMID.

- The situation of insecurity in Darfur has been compounded by the deteriorating and weak relations between Chad and Sudan. We welcome the --- efforts ---- aimed at defusing the situation including the decision of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and goal taken in January this year inter alia mandating the leaders of Libya and Chad as well as the agreement most recently signed in Dakar at the initiative of President Wade. The fact remains that without the normalization of relations between Chad and Sudan it is inconceivable to find a lasting solution to the conflict in Darfur. These all hardly must be on deals to ensure that the various Peace Agreements signed between Chad and Sudan are -----.

- Implemented Political Process
 - Jan Eliasson and I together with our colleagues of the Joint Mediation Support Team have drove the roads, met the Government and the Movements in the field and agreed with a view to creating --- for the commencement of substantive negotiations. But while limited progress has been made, the reached results are not something we can be proud of Efforts at providing some degree of unity and cohesion have continued and will continue. Clearly however is a full order. And what is being clear is that some of the Movements are not ready or prepared because of one reason or another to engage in negotiations nor has the Government of Sudan been prepared to take the much needed initiatives to give confidence to the Movements and overcome the state of distrust that prevails.

- 5. There are of course many other challenges that we shall discuss. As we do so, it is our hope that our discussion will be frank and profound with one singular objective namely how to end the conflict in Darfur, contribute to lasting peace and thereby enable the Darfurians to live in dignity derived of emplacement threats to their lives. And as we do so, we must all the time be fair and objective – encourage those who support the Peace Process and effectively discourage those whoever in the Government or among the Movements who constitute an obstacle to Peace.

Finally let me stress that a new approach is required given developments on the ground. This meeting provides a unique opportunity for us to reflect and make tangible contribution to that effect.