

LIMITED CIRCULATION

WORKING GROUP ON SUDAN: CANADA AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

March 28, 2000

Ottawa

On March 28, some government officials and NGOs met to reflect on what could Canada do to help alleviate the situation in Sudan and to contribute to a lasting peace in the region at the United Nations Security Council. Possibilities of moving forward through other multilateral bodies, including the IPF, IGAD and OPCW, were also addressed. Chaired by Joe Stern and organised by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, the roundtable included, among others, Heidi Hulan and Eric Hoskins from Minister Axworthy's office, Sandelle Scrimshaw, Director General of the Africa Bureau and other DFAIT officials. Garry Kenny and Kathy Vandergrift were also present. The meeting was a part of a series of consultations on Sudan and the role of Canada.

Heidi Hulan started the discussion by saying that Minister Axworthy is committed to take the Sudan issue to the Security Council. A Resolution has been penned and a draft distributed for this purpose. The immediate response of the Sudanese government, some Arab governments, as well as China and Russia has been negative. A "reassurance offensive" has been launched to counter the negative feedback of these countries.

It has been ascertained that at best, the Canadian delegation could achieve a statement to the press – a result of an informal "dungeon meeting" of the Security Council with no records, involving only Security Council members. There would be little weight or prestige to a press statement. This leaves Canada at a critical juncture. While the statement could refer to the grave humanitarian situation in Sudan and call for humanitarian access to blocked areas and a temporary humanitarian cease-fire, it would fall far short of a Resolution. Given the amount of resistance, even this lowest possible outcome would be a fight. Perhaps, the Council could seize the issue and develop a discussion in support of the peace process. While there would be some value in this development, is a statement, which may be seen by NGOs and others as meaningless, worth pursuing? Would it be helpful or not? And if not, what would be helpful? Would a seemingly futile struggle for a resolution/statement be seen as yet another failure of the human security agenda?

Some participants, including Kathy Vandergrift, argued that a statement would at least point to the massive problems in Sudan. Joe Stern said that it would put the international