

### **3 Forum I - Calgary**

The first part of the Sudan Civil Society Symposium, Forum I, was held in Calgary on June 5. It brought together members of the Sudanese community from across western Canada with people who are actively involved in the Sudan peace process - civil society representatives from Sudan, Canadian, US and European NGOs, representatives of Talisman Energy, interested Canadian citizens and representatives of the media. It was the first exchange of such dimensions on Sudan in Calgary.

The impact of the discussion was to galvanize those interested in long term peace in Sudan on key issues, including those described below.

#### **3.1 The International Mediation Process**

The current mediation process for Sudan involving the parties to the conflict and the international community has been extremely difficult and is seen by the Forum resource persons as being in deep trouble. The Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Mediation Committee member countries, chaired by Kenya, are currently unable to play their role due to the internal problems of the respective countries. There is a second peace initiative underway involving Egypt and Libya but the format and modalities of that process are less clear. The international community that comes together in the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) includes Canada. However, as the IPF relies on the IGAD process, its strategy is now also experiencing difficulties.

The list of several significant issues to be resolved that have been agreed by the parties is well known. Several of the issues are discussed in this report. However these issues have yet to be resolved by the parties to the conflict.

#### **3.2 The Escalation of the War**

There is an ongoing war in Sudan being waged throughout the country, with its main effects felt by the people in the south of Sudan. The war has been ongoing for more than seventeen years. It is a war that is escalating with the recent purchase by the Government of Sudan of significant new military equipment and ammunitions manufacturing capacity. The war contrasts with the so-called 'charm offensive' also being waged by the Government of Sudan to improve its international image. Most participants and speakers understood the 'liberalization' measures being undertaken by the GOS as being strictly for appearances only.

#### **3.3 Civil Society Voices Speak for Peace**

The voices of civil society in Sudan are many and diverse. They exist in exile, and also within the country. The internal voices exist under duress due to the massive impoverishment and displacement of Sudanese citizens during the 17 year since the war commenced in 1983. Especially notable are the voices of the women of Sudan who are making a special appeal for peace and an end to war, together with special efforts to resolve differences. Also of great importance is the People to People Peace Process currently underway in southern Sudan. This process deserves additional resources and support, given its success to date.

Participants and speakers stressed their interest in peace in Sudan and a resolution to the problems causing conflict, noting that too many people have died and too many people have been displaced to unacceptable temporary locations. The participants urged action such that the