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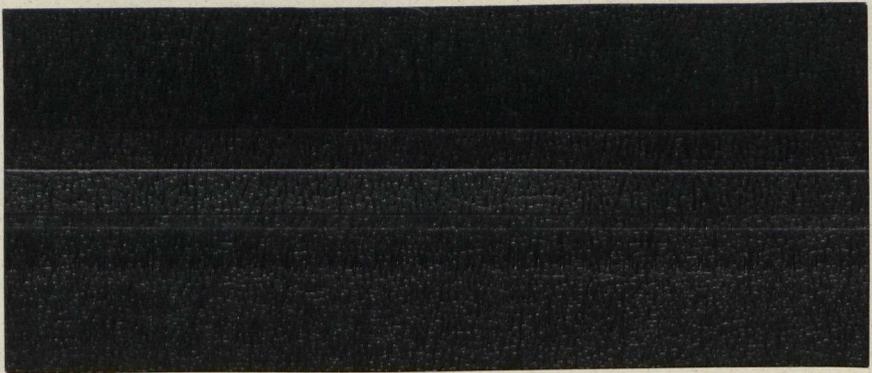
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LIMITED CIRCULATION

**SUDAN TASK FORCE
REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE
"WHAT CAN CANADA DO TO HELP?"**

**March 14, 2000
Ottawa**





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The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organized a roundtable on Sudan on March 14, 2000, in Ottawa as an initial step of the Sudan Task Force. The roundtable brought together experts, academics, and government officials to consider how Canada might best contribute to the Peace Process in Sudan. The roundtable was held in a room with a view of the Ottawa River and was held in a room with a view of the Ottawa River. The roundtable was held in a room with a view of the Ottawa River and was held in a room with a view of the Ottawa River.

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Finalist: The Discussion

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The lack of a coherent framework mapping the conditions for reconciliation in Sudan was identified. A rigorous analysis of key actors and their interests was also said to be missing. As a result, a sketch of what such a framework could look like emerged in the course of the day's discussion. To gain a firm understanding of the conflict in Sudan and conditions necessary for peace to "break out," actors to the conflict should be identified, their interests laid bare and the mechanisms of reconciliation explored. There are three levels at which strategic action occurs: 1) state, 2) civil society/grass-roots, and 3) the space in between. The framework should also identify ways to reconstruct the sense of violence and maintain the structures of peace.

- 1. The roundtable discussion followed roughly this outline and focused on:
- 1. outside state actors key to the Sudan conflict and their interests
- 2. outside strategic action on the civil society/grass-roots level
- 3. mechanisms and tools Canada could utilize to assist in the Sudan

2. Context: The Role and Interests of Outside Actors

The outline state report revolved in the Sudan:

1) The Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

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REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE "WHAT CAN CANADA DO TO HELP?"

March 14, 2000

Ottawa

The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised a roundtable on Sudan on March 14, 2000, in Ottawa as an enlarged meeting of the Sudan Task Force. The roundtable brought together experts, academics, NGOs and government officials to examine how Canada might best contribute to the Peace Process(es) and to consider mechanisms and tools available to carry out these contributions. The discussion was a part of the ongoing work of the Task Force.

1. Framing the Discussion

The lack of a coherent framework mapping the conditions for reconciliation in Sudan was identified. A rigorous analysis of key actors and their interests was also said to be missing. As a result, a sketch of what such a framework could look like emerged in the course of the day's discussion. To gain a firm understanding of the conflict in Sudan and conditions necessary for peace to "break out" actors to the conflict should be identified, their interests laid bare and the mechanics/tools of reconciliation explored. There are three levels at which strategic action occurs: 1) state, 2) civil society/grass-roots, and 3) the space in between. The framework should also identify ways to deconstruct the structures of violence and construct the structures of peace.

The roundtable discussion followed roughly this outline and focussed on:

1. outside state actors key to the Sudan conflict and their interests
2. outside strategic action on the civil society/grass-roots level and its link to the state level processes
3. mechanisms and tools Canada could utilise to contribute to peace in Sudan.

2. Context: The Role and Interests of Outside Actors

The outside state actors involved in the Sudan peace process include:

- 1) *The Inter-governmental Authority on Development – IGAD*

IGAD identifies common issues and problems related to development in Africa and includes: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Djibouti. It has a subcommittee devoted particularly to the peace process in Sudan, chaired by Kenya. IGAD was established in 1994 when the conflict in Sudan involved only two key actors: the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement/Army – SPLM/A and the government of Sudan. Since then, the conflict has become more national in scope. Today it encompasses diverse groups and actors, including the new National Democratic Alliance. The growing diversity of actors, the lack of desire for peace, as well as the nature of issues key to moving peace forward makes the IGAD peace process exceedingly cumbersome and slow.

Core issues for negotiation in the Sudan conflict are outlined in the **Declaration of Principles** (negotiated in 1994 and finally agreed to in 1997). The government of Sudan is reluctant to address these issues and is only willing to perceive the Declaration as a loose framework for negotiation. The most difficult issues to move on are the secularisation of the state and the question of self-determination for the South. The conflict in Sudan appears intractable because the government is unwilling to reverse the monolithic imposition of Islam on diverse religious and social groups. Moreover, while the South is unwilling to transfer its resources (i.e., water and oil) to the North (read the government in Khartoum), the North is unwilling to relinquish its control over these resources.

IGAD countries have other interests besides peace and development in Sudan. For instance, **Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya** suffer consequences of the conflict's spill-over (i.e., refugees). Their position is influenced by their interests in water resources and trade. They share common history, perceive themselves as a buffer zone against Arab expansionism and their governments fear the growth of political Islamic groups and the military support such groups receive. It is unlikely they would dramatically challenge the U.S. position. **Kenya**, moreover, appears to be possessive of the IGAD peace process and is inflexible on expanding the IGAD membership. It is also suspicious of IPF's (IGAD Partners Forum) "interference." Doubt about the capacity of the morally corrupt Kenyan government to lead the peace process was expressed. Egypt would be perhaps better suited to lead the process. Other African countries involved in the conflict include: Egypt, Libya, Algeria (as a president of OAU), Nigeria, and South Africa. The Arab League, Iran, China and Malaysia are also players.

2) Egypt and Libya

In addition to the IGAD peace process, **Egypt and Libya** have had their own peace initiatives. Egypt has been monitoring the developments in Sudan for a long time but its involvement has been negligible until the IGAD process gained momentum and the question of self-determination of the South became a real option a year ago. The reason behind the Egyptian reconciliation initiatives is to prevent the disintegration of Sudan. Other interests include: water resources, the control over Sudanese affairs, Arab solidarity, Egypt's relationship to Ethiopia, loyalty to certain political parties, as well as the continuing financial and political support from the U.S. The governments of Egypt and Libya met in **Tripoli** last summer to set the framework

for engagement. This framework falls short of the Declaration of Principles. It avoids the tough issues of religion and self-determination and addresses "softer" questions like the need to reduce levels of propaganda fuelling the conflict. The monetary leverage of Libya's government ensures Sudan's participation in such initiatives. However, the framework for negotiations is set by Sudan and the reconciliation initiatives of Egypt and Libya are often frustrated. The government of Sudan perceives the Egyptian initiatives as aimed at reconciliation of the North, while IGAD is increasingly seen as having a Southern focus.

3) IGAD Partners Forum - IPF

The IPF is a group of Western/Northern countries who desire to provide support for the IGAD peace process. The U.S., Canada, Norway, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, and the EU constitute the key IPF countries. The U.S. is the most influential. Factors playing into the U.S. position on Sudan include: the Christian black caucus; relationship with China (Taiwan), the Middle East, Egypt and Islamic relations in general; the activities of WTO and IPO (Intellectual Property Organisation); the fear of terrorism and proliferation of small arms, commercial interests (Coca Cola and oil in particular); as well as humanitarian concerns about the plight of Sudanese. It would appear that the U.S. has made up its mind to support the SPLM/A. The U.S. government encourages the international community to support the IGAD process (perceived to be effectively stalled by the Sudanese government's unwillingness to allow secularisation). It sees the self-determination issue as important and does not endorse the Egypt/Libya initiatives. It feels that Canada could be helpful but multiple initiatives should be avoided.

4) The United Nations Security Council

3. Civil Society, Track II and Track I ½ Initiatives

The issues taken up during the discussion of civil society and Track II initiatives included:

1. the link between NGOs and the civil society in general to the official negotiating process
2. the importance of engaging civil society in the peace process
3. Track I ½ initiatives
4. the need for a diversified and incremental approach to negotiations

The link between Track I (formal negotiations conducted by government officials) and Track II (NGOs and civil society) initiatives in Sudan remains fragile. The NGOs are anxious because their concerns and interests are not represented in the official peace process. Sudanese communities are suspicious of their leadership "cutting deals" with former arch enemies while ignoring pressing social and other concerns. *Therefore, trust must be build among the diverse Sudanese groups and bridges built between communities and their leadership.*

The engagement of Sudanese civil society in the peace process was seen as imperative.

Without active civil society participation (a stake in peace), a peace agreement will not likely be effective on the ground. Lack of participation may also have a negative impact on sustaining peace. *Thus, there is a need to create conditions under which civil society could broadly participate in the peace process (but not necessarily in the peace negotiations).*

A way to connect Track I and Track II may be through devising a Track I ½. In this model a local institution/group has a convening authority to bring people together from different sectors to bring their concerns and interests to the policy making process. The key is to create a "safe forum" for negotiations where consensus could be built from the moderate centre. Isolating extremes could prove very risky as extremists could become angry and even more fundamental without the influence of a "moderating" centre. The safe forum is a mechanism that provides space for negotiations within such a hostile context and protects the negotiators (i.e., members of different sectors and groups, senior decision makers, parties to a conflict, experts, academics, etc.). The role of the safe forum is to project itself outward: to provide information and ideas for public dialogue, to build trust across societal divides, and to forge understanding within/among the diverse segments of the general population. It should bring together all the stake-holders, be locally based and generally respected and moderate. The safe forum may draw on external support and advice. However, a clear distinction should be made and maintained throughout that the local convenor is the principal while the outside contributor is an agent. Finding a local convenor that fits the above mentioned characteristics is often very difficult. Discussions are most effective if they start small around an inconspicuous issue and grow in scale and scope gradually. Anchoring a safe forum within a credible local institution may enhance the sustainability of the dialogue.

Such Track I ½ initiatives are important in that they build relationships and social capital, something "hard" negotiations can not do. There is a great value in seeing and appreciating interdependent interests of opposing parties in any conflict and in identifying critical questions such as, for instance: who are the outside actors? What are the interests of the parties to a conflict? Safe fora also create the opportunity to think creatively (not for public attribution). However, extreme caution should be taken to protect those involved in Track I ½. Careful attention should be paid to questions including: who are the extremists? Is it practically possible to create a safe forum? Where are the interests in perpetuating conflict located? (Examples of Track I ½ initiatives include an Israeli-Palestinian Institute aimed at developing ideas for decision makers part to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.) It is not clear this approach is possible in a society at war.

It was said that the peace process should not comprise one large unified negotiation stream. Instead, it should reflect the complexity of the situation in Sudan (including the growing complexity of the opposition movement itself). *Incremental treaty building would not only be more manageable, but it would provide a clear tangible evidence to the Sudanese people of the process moving forward.* (The merits of incremental peacebuilding and institutionally anchored safe fora are apparent in South Africa where the gradual creation of quasi-governmental and other institutions aimed at facilitating dialogue enabled a relatively peaceful transition from

Apartheid.) Unlike Sudan, South Africa was not at war but in a transition process.

Caution was raised about assuming Sudanese civil society to be coherent enough to meaningfully participate in the peace process. The level of civil society coherence in Sudan is fairly low. The importance of using a "stick" as well as the "carrot" in peacebuilding projects was also brought up. An example was given of a World Bank project in Sri Lanka where the World Bank, regulated by the Sri Lankan government, acts as a convenor for a reconciliation conference, for example. Often good ideas are necessary but not sufficient to move the peacebuilding process forward.

The discussion generated a number of key questions: When is the right time to intervene in a conflict? Are the conditions in Sudan ripe for Canadian involvement? Could outside involvement actually exacerbate the situation on the ground rather than help? What is the best way to intervene? In other words, how to engage with existing institutions and mechanisms without interfering with existing processes?

4. Evaluating Current and Possible Future Canadian Contributions

Several issues came into focus during a discussion about Canadian contributions:

1. the relationship between long-standing humanitarian assistance and the longevity of conflict
2. incorporating conflict resolution objectives into development projects
3. the role of Canadian media in shaping public opinion on foreign policy toward Sudan
4. the expectations of the Canadian public in dealing with the Sudan conflict
5. mechanisms and tools/assets for Canadian contributions

CIDA has been involved in Sudan in two areas: 1) humanitarian relief and 2) support for the peace process. Humanitarian relief efforts are indirectly tied to the peace process. The need to deliver humanitarian aid in Sudan is evident and the need to do so neutrally and impartially is keen. There is a diversion of emergency supplies by all parties, including the government of Sudan and the SPLA. After the SPLA attempted to impose a Memorandum of Understanding on relief agencies, NGOs withdrew from Sudan because they believed it would hinder their impartiality. CIDA supported this move resulting in the loss of an important delivery capacity. Canada is urging the SPLA to open negotiations, however, an early break-through is unexpected. Some speculate that the SPLA is aware of pressures donors will be under if a humanitarian crisis intensifies. Canada could be faced with a political and moral dilemma whether to respond to humanitarian needs without a delivery mechanism in place.

CIDA has come to a conclusion that there exists donor fatigue over the long-standing humanitarian aid to Sudan. *While there is constant need for humanitarian assistance, a durable resolution to the conflict is far off. Without a lasting peace, there is little chance of this need diminishing.* In some instances, regular outside delivery of aid may actually sustain conflict.

Could this be the case in Sudan?

CIDA has initiated and supported some concrete initiatives for peace. It has provided financial and technical support to the Peace Secretariat in Nairobi which functions as an organised forum for peace talks. *It has also began to incorporate conflict resolution objectives into larger development projects.* Some ground-breaking work has been already done. Furthermore, CIDA supports the following initiatives and projects:

- initiatives by Project Ploughshares
- the Inter-Africa Group which functions as the IGAD resource group for consultations
- a project by Alternative conducting a survey of Sudanese civil society in the North and South and devising strategic initiatives that would involve civil society in the peace process (watch for an upcoming Conference in Ottawa)
- a symposium on Sudan in Ottawa (March 30 – April 1, 2000, with the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development)¹
- the Southern Sudan Council of Churches
- a Dutch initiative on the role of women (watch for a Conference in April, Maastricht)
- ongoing negotiations at the Peace Secretariat in Nairobi
- ongoing work at CIDA on Sudan

The peace process in Sudan, including Track I, Track II and Track I ½ is a "high risk venture" and it may very well fail. It is necessary to maintain a long-term vision and expect setbacks. In this respect, the inflated expectations of the Canadian public have to be adjusted. The media play a big role in forming these unrealistic expectations about the effectiveness of foreign policy in Sudan as they tend to paint the picture in black and white. The complexity of the peace process, nature of the enmity, strategic interests of inside and outside actors, war as a "business" or survival decision, all have to be considered when addressing the conflict in Sudan.

Besides its humanitarian and peacebuilding activities, *Canada is looking at the possibility of putting a resolution on Sudan to the UN Security Council.* However, such a resolution could actually adversely impact the IGAD peace process and run into fierce resistance at the Security Council and the General Assembly. Would a UN resolution be helpful to IGAD and IPF or hinder/fracture the peace process? The potential of the UN resolution could be to speak to the overarching/interdependent desire to achieve peace and development in Sudan under the umbrella of Canada's human security objectives. The resolution would not have to be a bold statement. It could serve as a rallying point for others and a launching point for further Canadian initiatives.

Given the conflicting messages about the UN resolution from the Canadian government, it is difficult to ascertain now whether not having a resolution would irritate partners and the

¹Now postponed due to visa problems for participants.

public even more than having one. Minister Axworthy may be expected to come up with a strong resolution in the wake of criticism resulting from what some believe to be a "soft" reaction to the Harker Report. While a resolution is being crafted (calling primarily for the peace process to coalesce around IGAD and the Declaration of Principles), there is a possibility the Security Council will discuss Sudan and produce a memo instead. Nevertheless, efforts to garner support for the resolution have started and the countries in opposition to its passage have a chance to reconsider their position.

Canada could exert influence as a member of the IPF. Through a UN resolution a strong message could be sent to the IPF members that Canada is a player. Canada could also participate/create a safe forum under the auspices of the IPF and bring parties together to talk about human security (as their common/interdependent interest). However, the perceptions of human security abroad as a tool of Northern neocolonialism may be an obstacle. Another problem may be IGAD's resistance to such an initiative (IGAD members tend to monopolise the peace process and see it as exclusively their affair).

Canada could share its experience in the concept of self-determination without secession and various forms of "non-sovereign" governance -- themes that come to focus when addressing Aboriginal and Quebec issues. Federalism at the local level, such as teachers' federations and so on, as well as Canada's experience with multiculturalism and civil society may also be of some value. *Canada's history of peacefully and creatively working on these ideas of governance, coexistence, and civil society engagement may have some bearing in other parts of the world.* Canada could play a role of a supporting and/or convening agent for a local group/organisation on these issues. Caution was raised that if such an outside-led process breaks down, it can do more harm than good as people involved and on the ground lose faith. (An example is a UNDP-led initiative in Barcelona in the early 1990's. Two meetings of prominent experts, analysts, academics, as well as parties to the Sudan conflict, including the SPLA, met in a conference to address issues in the Sudan conflict, like religious freedom. The process lacked sustainability and broke down.) Nevertheless, it is advisable to convene such events around inconspicuous small issues that may seem isolated from the larger context (i.e., the improvement of a tax system). From these small straightforward issues stem bigger, more contentious questions (i.e., self-determination, reform of administration and governance) around which convening and negotiating is difficult.

Other Canadian assets include:

- military and other alliances/partnerships with the U.S.,
- experience/expertise in peacekeeping,
- experience/expertise in peacebuilding (CIDA).

A point was raised that instead of concentrating on bilateral and unilateral action toward/in Sudan the international community could be made more effective. The IGAD peace process should remain central. Furthermore, some pointed out that peace and security are not necessarily common/interdependent. There are parties that benefit from conflict and have

interests in perpetuating war and misery.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it was said that the complexity of the issues and the middle power status of Canada demand humility. Canadian initiatives should, therefore, be relatively small and focussed. Canada should utilise its reputation abroad as a neutral broker. Sudan is a classic example of human insecurity and therefore a compelling reason for Canadian engagement. As an agent, Canada could create/broker safe fora for negotiations, while drawing on the expertise of CIDA in peacebuilding. Canada could make large contributions to issues including: self-determination, resources (i.e., water and oil), coexistence (i.e., multiculturalism and types of federalism) and others. Canada could use its seat at the UN Security Council, membership in the IPF, and other Track I ½ initiatives. Challenges remain in communicating with the media and the public about Canada's role. Discussions are ongoing in other fora on issues such as, for instance: donor coherence, questions surrounding Talisman (including, compliance, monitoring, and rehabilitation), resource exploitation, and the role of Canada in the peace process.

A call to build on the roundtable and create a rigorous discussion on policy making toward Sudan, involving key government departments and NGOs, before devising initiatives and policy options was made. Canadian actors and their core interests and resources should be identified. There should be an awareness of the changing context in Sudan and a well managed process mapped out before acting. A close analysis of the internal dynamics of the conflict is also indispensable. The role of Churches should be looked at and the insight and experience of Sudanese Canadians, including those coming from North Sudan, drawn on. A professional resource group could be set up to look at conflict resolution from the development point of view, possibly under the auspices of Senator Wilson. In the short term, there will be a small roundtable with NGOs this month in Calgary (March 28, 2000) and in Ottawa (March 30 – April 1, 2000). The next enlarged meeting of the Task Force will be on March 31st, 2000, in Ottawa.

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