

## Reclaiming Common Ground New Hall, Cambridge, UK, 27-31 January 2008

This consultation was facilitated at New Hall, Cambridge, by Concordis International in partnership with the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) preparatory committee and generously funded by the Government of Japan. Approximately 25 Darfurians and other Sudanese met at the first of several consultations inside and outside Sudan, designed to inform the DDDC process of Darfurians' views and perspectives on important issues associated with the conflict in Darfur. Participants invited to this consultation included representatives of the full spectrum of key Darfurian constituencies based in Europe. They attended in a personal capacity, in order to encourage a frank and open exchange of ideas. The aim was to develop as much consensus as is possible on issues such as: security; land and natural resources; recovery and development; identity; administration and democracy; and reconciliation.

On the matter of **security**, participants highlighted that Darfur was affected by conflict and violence at a number of levels, much of which is the result of systematic marginalisation of Darfurians. Agreeing that divisions among Darfurians make solutions impossible, they stressed the importance of developing Darfurian unity. They felt it important that impunity be ended and that a functional legal system be established. The traditional forms of dispute resolution and customary law were viewed as valuable resources to be utilised. It was also strongly felt that trust in the government, the security sector and the international community needed to be re-established.

The participants acknowledged the role **land and natural resources** have played in exacerbating the conflict. The consensus was that the traditional *hakura* system had been both popular and effective and should be reinstated, but in a manner that was more inclusive and representative. Issues relating to water, desertification and environmental degradation should be dealt with if there is to be any sustainable peace. The resettlement of IDPs once the conflict is over was another vitally important but complex issue.

Darfur's immense deficit in infrastructural **development** was viewed both as a catalyst for the conflict and a problem the conflict is worsening. Participants recognised that Darfur is not yet in a post-conflict situation, making attempts at development very difficult. However, they felt that when development happens the process must be owned by the people of Darfur themselves. They stressed the important roles for women and for the diaspora in the development of Darfur. Distributional issues needed to be addressed by the development process. Participants suggested implementing a fiscal monetary commission as a mechanism for fighting corruption and increasing transparency.



The participants explored the topic of **identity**, recognising the fluid nature of identity in Darfur. They stressed the importance of reducing the **polarised 'Arab' and 'African' view of identity** now prevalent in Darfur as a result of conflict. Sudan should **embrace the cultural, ethnic and racial diversity** that exists in the country; all of Sudan's people should be represented in the nation's history through **media, politics and the education system**.

On the issues of **administration and democracy**, the participants identified a number of weaknesses with the current administrative system. The participants explored a number of different political options for Darfur. Although there were a range of political opinions held by the participants, especially regarding the matter of Darfurian independence, there was consensus on the need for real democracy in Sudan.

Participants felt that **justice and reconciliation** were two different things, suggesting that reconciliation is a process that should come from the victims. A reconciliation process in Darfur would need to be holistic, inclusive and comprehensive. However, before this process could be implemented participants also highlighted a number of preconditions, namely; security; the existence of a pragmatic peace settlement; the return of IDPs; and punishment for the architects and executors of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the matter of the International Criminal Court, they felt that ICC involvement could contribute to reconciliation but would not be sufficient to reconcile Darfurian society. More would be needed than the ICC alone, including local practices and a locally owned process. Some participants felt that the relative ineffectiveness of the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur (SCCED) served to underscore the need for international involvement through the ICC.

The participants were positive about the potential of the DDDC process and felt that the consultation had been worthwhile and would serve to inform the DDDC process.