

A Step Forward In the Fight for Peace on Darfur

Over 160 Sudanese, African and international women came together for a Second Sudanese Women's Forum on Darfur that resulted in the drafting of a Constitution to institutionalise the Forum and the preparation of a Declaration on Darfur to be used for advocacy.



Sudanese women thank Ms Diop and Ms Robinson for the Forum during a cocktail party. January 6th 2009

This Second Meeting of the Sudanese Women's Forum on Darfur (SWOFOD) was took place from January 5th-7th 2009, at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Forum was held in partnership with Realizing Rights and Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) supported by the UK-Department for International Development (DFID) and Norwegian Government.

The SWOFOD is part of a larger project that aims to engender the peace process in Darfur by building on the capacities of Sudanese Women to mobilize various stake holders and engage in advocacy activities; to consolidate the peace agenda on Darfur through a consultative process; and to facilitate the participation of the Sudanese women in peace negotiations.

It was a follow up to the fact finding and solidarity mission that was undertaken from September 2nd-5th, 2007 in Chad, led by President of Realizing Rights, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner of Human Rights Mrs. Mary Robinson with a delegation of seven other prominent women including FAS Executive Director Ms. Bineta Diop.

Following a process of consultative meetings and planning in cooperation with the Sudanese Women since January 2008, the overall objective of the SWOFOD was to review the progress made in implementing the women's agenda; adopt a Constitution and other legal instruments to formalize the

Forum; and Link the forum with African and other international women leaders and mobilize the international press on the situation of women in Darfur.

After two and half days of discussions and consultations, the Sudanese Women agreed on a 'Declaration on Darfur', 'Challenges, recommendations and a way forward', and the adoption of a constitution. The forum also acted as a podium which enabled the Sudanese women to elect a committee of the wise, a governing board and consultative members as representatives of all the three regions of Darfur (N, S W), Khartoum and Southern Sudan.

A press conference was held to raise awareness about the situation in Darfur and to bring attention to women's dexterity in the region. It also acted as a catalyst to advocate for peace and security at the national, regional and international level.

It is further planned for the Third Sudanese Women's Forum on Darfur to assess progress and action to strengthen their capacities until peace, justice and security is accomplished.

While there are many fewer deaths compared to the preceding years, increasing cases of violence on the IDPs and attack on the civilians is much too evident. The new realities emphasise the necessity of broadening the participation in peace negotiations, to include its primary victims namely women. They need to be on the agenda of the new negotiations if an eventual agreement is to achieve the wide support.

The group shared their peace initiatives focusing their discussions on identifying the strategies to include the Darfur women at the peace negotiation table and incorporating broader and more representative voices at the International *fora*, the issue of land tenure and rights, issue of justice and repatriation of victim of violence and the application of UNSCR 1325.

The synopsis of the forum included Mrs Robinson to lead a team of participants in a day of advocacy at the African Union in Addis Ababa, to convey the message of the Sudanese women to the leaders responsible for supporting peace in Darfur.