

An Open Letter from Sudanese Civil Society Addressing the consultation of the African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Peace, Stability and Democratization in Sudan

**H.E. President Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel
Members of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP)**

CC. H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission

CC. Members of the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC)

P.O. Box 3243
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Your Excellencies,

We the undersigned represent Sudanese independent civil society, non-governmental and grass-roots societies, networks and forums, displaced persons, refugees as well as independent figures in Sudanese civic life.

We have been closely following the efforts exerted by the African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP) under the chairmanship of President Thabo Mbeki, particularly the outcome of its meetings with the Government of Sudan last weeks, and its declared intention to meet with the Sudan Call Forces sometime next week in the Ethiopian capital. In this respect, and by means of this letter, we are keen to stress the importance of our engagement in continued discussion with the AUHIP on its role in Sudan.

By this letter, we the undersigned humbly anticipate that your current meetings with the Sudanese, regional and international parties, especially the AU Peace and Security Council, which established the AUHIP, would result in the evolution of the AUHIP: in particular we desire to see AUHIP intensify its direct engagement with Sudan's political and civic forces in addressing the humanitarian calamity facing millions of Sudanese and tackle Sudan's deep crisis of governance through supporting a democratic constitutional process that incorporates all Sudanese, to achieve a comprehensive and just peace and usher in a genuine democratic transformation.

This memorandum comes at a critical time. We believe that the work of the AUHIP is stuck in irreversible deadlock. There can be no further waste of time and resource faced with the continuing refusal of, and violations by the Government of Sudan, of the activities, positions and decisions of the AUHIP and the AU, including violation of AU Peace and Security Council Resolution 456.

The outcome of recent meetings between President Al Bashir and former President Mbeki confirm that the AUHIP in its current state has exhausted its options. President Al Bashir has repeatedly rejected any vital role for AUHIP in peacemaking and democratization. He has announced that the national dialogue will start "with those who attend". He insists on the Doha Document as the sole solution for the crisis in Darfur, despite its stark failure to create peace, rejection by major political forces and the large increase in displacement of people. Further he

declares that talks with the SPLM/N should center on final security arrangements (the very reason for the re-eruption of war in the Two Areas) without addressing first the humanitarian issues or the comprehensive solution envisioned by all the political and civic forces represented in the Sudan Call Alliance. In contrast to the Government of Sudan, the parties to the Sudan Call Alliance have demonstrated full cooperation in its dealing with the AUHIP

We in Sudanese civil society urge that your upcoming consultations consider decision making on the following three major proposals:

Upgrading the effectiveness and performance of the AUHIP

It is almost six years since the expansion of the AUHIP's mandate in October 2009 to include implementation of the recommendations of the then Darfur panel - the African Union Implementation Panel for Darfur. These recommendations was adopted by African Heads of State Summit in Abuja with the participation and endorsement of the Government of Sudan. Nevertheless through seven years of the Panel work the Government of Sudan and its ruling party has continued to refuse constructive and progressive engagement. It has resisted implementation of the decisions made by the AUHIP, starting with its procrastination around implementing the Panel's recommendations on Darfur, up to the recent meeting with President Al Bashir where he refused to allow the AUHIP to play a leading roles with regard to Sudan's multiple crisis.

We in Sudanese civil society believe that the AUHIP has expended significant time and resources to work with the people of Sudan in addressing their deep crisis. These time and resources have not, however, helped to improve the miserable situation in the country where wars and political oppression continue to be the norm. They have not been translated into effective pressure that might have achieved the AUHIP's objectives--to which the people of Sudan also aspire—a just peace, stability, political transformation and positive contribution towards regional and international peace and security.

We in Sudanese civil society, in line with the AUHIP's current consultations, believe that the Panel must be elevated and equipped to respond to the extent and magnitude of the crisis suffered by the people of Sudan. As a starting point, we believe that the AUHIP should incorporate new partners in its structure and daily work in order to bolster its momentum, political influence and effectiveness. This new partners structuring of the AUHIP might include relevant neighboring states, leading African states, European states concerned with Sudan's issues, in addition to representation of regional and international organizations, such as the EU, the Troika and the UN.

Addressing the conflicts' human catastrophes

You will be aware of the miserable and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sudan. The people of Darfur have been in the heart of this suffering for the past 12 years. The horrifying situation in South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile has continued for four years since the re-eruption of civil war. The numbers of war victims are on the rise. Hundreds of thousands have been massacred. Millions have been displaced. Refugee camps in the Republic of South Sudan, Ethiopia and Chad are congested. There are millions of Sudanese in the Diaspora. All of these victims were forced to flee after destruction of properties, schools, health facilities, mosques, churches and farms and shortages in food, medicine, shelter, clean water, as a result of Government obstruction of humanitarian aid. A decade of aerial bombardment by government forces and its militias has destroyed communities and whole regions in Darfur and in Southern Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile.

We in Sudanese civil society support the resolutions of the AU Peace and Security Council on addressing the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. We urge that as part of our proposal to encourage the evolution of the AUHIP that a new humanitarian and human rights agenda is created which would prioritize addressing such calamities and preventing their reoccurrence, based on principles of justice and accountability. This should be predicated on sufficiently pressuring the parties to: reach a comprehensive cessation of hostilities, protect citizens, (including through stopping military attacks and government bombardment in all war zones in Darfur, the Blue Nile and South Kordofan/Nuba Mountains); disarm militias; and open safe corridors to provide humanitarian aid.

Stability and democratic transformation

We the undersigned stress that any negotiation process which is conducted bilaterally and solely between the Government of Sudan and its ruling party on one side and any of the political armed movements on the other is simply not viable. We reiterate our uncompromising rejection of the National Congress Party's so called "dialogue with whoever attends", which has been continuing for more than a year. Neither process will achieve comprehensive and just peace, nor lead to the democratic change to which the people of Sudan aspire: they will just serve the interests of the ruling party and its head. We strongly support a process that leads inexorably to one, final and comprehensive solution to the multiple crisis in Sudan; a solution that rids the country of civil wars, political suppression, economic collapse and deep governance crisis.

We in Sudanese civil society propose that the AUHIP mobilize its diplomatic and political capacities to seek a re-structuring and strengthening of the Panel. It should endeavor to obtain a new regional and international resolution endorsing the above mentioned proposal to create new AUHIP partners alongside mandating its stewardship of a new single political process to (1) exert all necessary pressure to allow for confidence building and the creation of a conducive political and security environment, (2) achieve a comprehensive cessation of hostilities in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan/ Nuba Mountains in order to address the humanitarian crisis (3) draft a road map for a new constitutional process, including the necessary constitutional arrangements (4) develop mechanisms to address issues related to the conflicts zones, and (5) agree on the executive mechanism of governance and the interim period for the new political process, in order to achieve a comprehensive and just peace, stability and political change.

In conclusion, we, the undersigned civil society actors, have already met and addressed the AUHIP collectively as civil society, as in this letter and our earlier letter dated 10 March 2014, or individually as NGOs and civic initiatives, such as your correspondences and meetings with the Civil Society Initiative, Darfur Bar Association and Sudan Democracy First Group. In this regard, we welcome any engagement with the AUHIP, and express our readiness to send a delegation to engage with Panel and elaborate on explaining our points of view as stated in this memorandum.

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