



OFFICE OF UN RESIDENT AND HUMANITARIAN CO-ORDINATOR
FOR THE SUDAN

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RCHC/SUD/Note 30

NOTE TO MR. EGELAND

Humanitarian access in Darfur Region, Sudan

1. On 11 February, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail asked to see me on Darfur. The atmospherics of this meeting were extremely cordial and optimistic. The Minister reported that President el Bashir on 9 February had issued an official statement declaring the end of military operations; granting an amnesty to rebel forces (provided they handed in their weapons within one month); opening corridors to international and local relief organisations; providing for a prompt action plan for sustainable IDP returns; for arrangements on refugee returns (between the authorities, Chad and UNHCR) as well as planning for weapon control and collection throughout Darfur.
2. The Minister also announced the upcoming creation of a National Committee, comprised of tribal chiefs and other representatives of civil society, which would be tasked with promoting reconciliation and popular participation in resettlement efforts. He emphasized that an all-inclusive and Government-sponsored conference of local leaders on development, peace and coexistence in Darfur would be held within the next ten days, and welcomed the UN participation therein. President of Chad Mr. Idriss Deby, he noted, would be also invited to participate in this event. A statement including the text of Abeche agreements would be issued at the end of the conference.
3. The Minister requested the UN to assist the GoS in its development efforts, namely in disarming all citizens and groups throughout Darfur (with the exception of regular armed forces). I assured the Minister of the UN's full support to look into this. I stressed that arms collection should preferably be initiated within a "weapons for development" framework, to ensure sustainable disarmament process.
4. In answer to my pressing question about access, the Minister reiterated the Government's previously stated commitment to open Darfur on 16 February. I informed the Minister of the arrival of Special Envoy Ambassador Tom Vraalsen tomorrow, and of his plan to visit Darfur within the next three days.

Dr. Mukesh Kapila