

Joint SLM/JEM Position for the Third Round of the Abuja Talks

The JEM and SLM believe that the Abuja talks are at a crossroads.

The GOS, which was not interested in finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Darfur and the whole of Sudan from the outset, has used the talks to buy time and deflect international pressure, even as it continues to violate previous agreements and commitments. Its genocidal war against the people of Darfur continues with greater intensity than at any time before the start of the talks. It is working to impose a military solution, using the peace talks as a fig-leaf. The situation in Darfur is getting worse and not better.

The AU, under whose auspices the talks are being conducted, and the facilitators working with it, have not been even-handed in their treatment of the parties. It has also become clear that they lack leverage on the parties, specially the GOS, to ensure that they negotiate in good faith.

The United Nations and the international community at large seem to have regarded the Abuja talks as a side-show to the negotiations in Naivasha. The UNSC meeting in Nairobi refused to discuss Darfur. We cannot but sadly note that the international community wants the Abuja talks to mark time, as it mistakenly hopes that Naivasha will resolve the problems of Sudan.

In these circumstances and given the gravity of the situation as well as the duplicity and lack of seriousness of the GOS, the SLM and JEM declare the following:-

The GOS has trampled underfoot the agreements it signed and the commitments it entered into, including the cease-fire agreement and the disarming of the Janjaweed. The JEM and SLM call on the African Union and the international community to ensure that

Khartoum abides by its commitments and stops its war and genocide in Darfur. Unless concrete steps are taken in this regard, the SLM and JEM will reconsider their participation in these talks, which, in any case, will have been turned into a charade.

The JEM and SLM support the Naivasha talks, but are convinced that even if successfully concluded they cannot resolve the problems of Darfur and Sudan. Indeed they distort the problems of Sudan by seeing them through a North-South prism and can end up complicating their resolution. The SLM and JEM call on the international community to give the political resolution of the underling causes of the crises in Darfur, Eastern Sudan and other parts of the country the same attention it is giving the SPLM-GOS talks.

The JEM and SLM call for an overhaul of the AU setup for the Abuja talks, which up to now has favoured one of the Parties, that is the GOS. Our repeated demands that the US the EU and other African countries participate as mediators, in the interests of strengthening the AU mechanism, have been ignored, while mediators suggested by and favoring the GOS have been included. We now request that the US, EU and other African countries formally join the mediation process. The IGAD experience in Naivasha shows that the Abuja talks can only benefit as a result.

The SLM and JEM call for a specific time frame to bring the Abuja talks to conclusion. Sterile and drawn out discussions, which is what the GOS wants, cannot be acceptable, while Darfur burns and its people suffer the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Specifically, we propose that the talks conclude by January 31, 2005.

The JEM and SLM propose that the talks immediately move to a discussion of the underlying political and socio-economic causes

of the conflict. We jointly propose the following framework for a political solution:-

1. Sudan is a poly-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation. This reality must inform the Sudanese constitution and must be reflected in the character of the Sudanese state.

2. The fundamental cause of the political crisis that has bedeviled Sudan and the numerous wars raging in the country is the extreme political, economic and cultural marginalisation of the overwhelming majority of Sudanese and the monopolisation of power and resources by a small minority.

3. All regions of Sudan must have the right to rule themselves in a genuine federal arrangement, where the center only has the powers that are agreed to by the constituent regions.

4. There must be a just and equitable share of power and resources at the national level.

5. A transitional period of three years, during which a national constitution will be ratified and at the end of which national elections will be held. An inclusive transitional government will be set up to lead the country under a democratic, transitional constitution. The transitional government will reflect the principle of equitable sharing of national power and resources by the country's regions.

6. In regard to Darfur,

6.1 The people of Darfur will set up a transitional government for the united region and rule themselves democratically.

6.2 The people of Darfur will have an equitable share of national power and resources during the transition period.

6.3 The reconstruction and rehabilitation of Darfur and other war-ravaged regions as well as subsequent sustainable development will be a national priority. There will be fair compensation for people affected by the war.

6.4 The historically owned and inherited tribal land (hawakeer) will be recognized.

6.5 The SLM and JEM will maintain their armed forces during the transition period. A portion of those forces will be integrated into the national army during the transition.

6.6 The Janjaweed will be disarmed and the perpetrators of the genocide in Darfur will be brought to justice.

6.7 There will be an international peace-keeping force in Darfur to guarantee the political agreement until the end of the transition.

7. An all-inclusive national constitutional conference must be convened within six months of a peace agreement to find a comprehensive political solution, ratify a transitional constitution (which cannot contradict the principles enunciated in this framework) and set up an inclusive transitional government.