



Meeting Summary

A New Strategy for Darfur

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Dr Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani:

It is a pleasure to be here.

You may have seen a peace strategy in its final form drawn up with the stakeholders and Thabo Mbeki. In order to launch this strategy, we promised a complete outlook towards Darfur to resolve problems. It is a way of re-projecting our priorities in Darfur rather than a reinvention of new ones. This has been necessitated by the need to make the machinery of the state work in a systematic manner.

We made a point to discuss this openly and publish it. We have focused on five components, which are the most important issues at stake:

- Security. Without it we cannot address any of the other issues. In this case it must be seen in a political context. How we define it in the strategy is not to mean just armed action. It is diplomacy, and deals with regional relations. It is important over time in Darfur, Chad, Central African Republic and Libya. It is also a means of enhancing the stability of the internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps – there can be no arms there.
- Negotiations are ongoing in Darfur. This is important to emphasise. Some people have been critical and have called it a military strategy, but it is one of the most important components. I have just come from Doha where we discussed a road map. The strategy emphasises the need for reform of the political process, to make it productive and we are proposing steps to be taken by the negotiators in order to make it happen.
- The resettlement of IDPs. This is important because it is a remnant of the problem. As long as there are IDPs, the problem is not solved. There was recently a case at the Kalma and Hamidia camps where people were killed. It is very important to deepen new policies for IDPs. Just before I came to London, I met with Mbeki and the US Envoy to discuss the new sub-strategy for IDPs, with the AU, NGOs and the international community to address questions on the common terms for the future, how to relate and how to deal with UN agencies. It was a very successful meeting with our partners, and I hope to embark on a plan along agreed international principles. This is going to prove to be the most difficult aspect. We do not just need to

agree the terms, but also the amount of money. The Arab League and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) countries have promised to support this. We also need to consider the refugees in Chad.

- Development. In drafting this strategy we have been conscious that this has been one of the most important elements in Darfur. Unless and until this added successfully, we cannot think that the problem will go away. The matter will stay crucial, especially for elites.

The government recently allocated \$1.9 billion for development, with \$1.5 million available now. We hope to increase this amount by canvassing amongst friendly countries. The \$1.9 billion is for four years, almost a quarter is available now and is being implemented. If we can raise the money it will make a difference for Darfur. We are assuming that if separation takes place, this will not stop the policy.

- Reconciliation. This is very important for Darfur. We have a long history of techniques and efforts for this, and we believe it is important to embark on preventative reconciliation because there are so many inter-tribal feuds and conflict to resolve.

The pattern of violence has changed. In 2003 and 2004, it was mainly the result of clashes between rebel movements and government troops. Now there are interfactional conflicts, so the strategy will introduce new concepts.

The first of these is partnership – this is the first time the government is speaking like this with regional, internal and international players; with AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and with the African Union (AU). Partnership entails acting on equal terms to decide how to implement strategies. Discussing with UNAMID on various policies and trying to resolve the issues. At the 24th September UN meeting in New York, we had a side-meeting with a committee including the UN, AU and government of Sudan. It was interesting to combine the challenges ahead and to see how people can work ahead. Partnership is very central.

The second concept is of the shifting centre of gravity, which has moved from external efforts to internal ones. For instance, wide consultations should take

place inside Darfur. Finally, the strategy is described as being dynamic. It keeps addressing emergencies and so forth that crop up.

After lengthy discussions with stakeholders in Sudan, it will be dynamic. This is not an attempt to undermine or undercut combined efforts of outside players. Lessons we have drawn from these efforts was that society in Darfur is not prepared, so the deal did not take root. We are preparing society and the community in Darfur, and this is very important.

Once we reach a political settlement, we have to take it to Darfur and discuss during consultations. Mbeki has been tasked with this at Abuja last year. The report included consultations in Darfur. In Doha, it is emphasised that there is a need to speed up the process on oil sharing issues.

Most important is not to fall into a state where we sign with one rebel movement, as it can not become an agreement between the government and one other group. We cannot tailor-make settlements for each one. We need to address the real grievances of the people in Darfur. We have to involve them. NGOs, IDPs and elected members of political bodies should all participate in consultations before it is signed.

This phase needs to be dealt with. There are different interpretations of the mandates of the AU. These consultations are in the final document, which has been made available by different parties to sign.

We need to protect the document. We should not make the 2006 mistake of leaving the signatories alone, and not protecting the agreement from spoilers – individuals, organisations, rebel groups, governments, and regional or international actors. Protection can be through resolutions passed by the AU and the UN Security Council, and they need to be clear of their support.

We agreed a clear and strict road map with mediators, as the strategy points out. We must not allow the peace process in Darfur to negatively affect the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), or vice versa. Having said so, we all agree the need and can reach a settlement before the end of the year. We need to deal with all of the other steps before then, and this is possible if the mediators show more commitment and readiness to proceed. Hopefully in Khartoum we will have to watch carefully and press in all developments so that we can have a viable peace settlement before the end of the year.

Q & A SESSION:

Q: How do you feel that the roadmap is undermined by warrants on President Bashir? Does it distract from or hinder the peace process? What attempts has Khartoum made to deal with the issue?

A (Dr Ghazi): It is a drag on the peace process, it has complicated it and it is contradictory. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is demanding that certain things are done by the President but it is also putting his personal freedom in jeopardy. We are trying to operate normally. We discuss with EU countries and OSI states, and keep pressing them to listen to what Africans want them to do. We have not had success so far, unfortunately the issue has been sensitive.

Q: The AU through Mbeki produced a report on the approach to reconciliation and justice in Darfur. What is your position on the report, particularly the idea of hybrid tribunals?

A: We officially upheld the report at Abuja. Of the report in its entirety, we have reservations on hybrid courts and discussed it privately with Mbeki. There are ways of reconciling justice. The only part of the report which we believe will be difficult is identifying what the mandate will be.

Q: If the South secedes, what will happen with the oil revenues in reference to your arrangement for Darfur? How can you talk of security without talking of disarming the Janjaweed?

A: I never said anything about oil revenue-sharing in relation to Darfur. The capacity of central government to deliver promises of development might be difficult after separation, because the revenue of government will be in decline.

On disarmament, the strategy is clear. We would like to disarm the so-called Janjaweed, who apparently claim to have government support, and the Tora Bora who some claim are receiving arms from Southern Sudan. We mean comprehensive all-encompassing disarmament. So in the end, it is only people with official remit who can carry arms.

Q: The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) has issues to raise before the return to talks. They have asked for their commanders to have the right to visit in the field and in Chad. Are you prepared to allow this?

A: I know that the Chadians are not interested in this, having spoken personally to Chad's President. I do not see how we can allow someone who has not accepted the ceasefire to go and meet his troops and give them

instructions. This can not help peace. Nothing is stopping JEM from going to Doha. The terms and conditions they have put have not had anything to do with troops on the ground, and things must be discussed with mediators. This was never put as a condition that could go to Doha. In my own assessment, they want the issues of South Sudan and Darfur to become mixed, and that's why we gave a clear indication at Doha.

Q: I want to correct a point. You mentioned the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) giving arms to Darfur. We do not have arms. Of late, the government in Khartoum is focusing on Darfur but things like border demarcation and separation issues still need to be sorted. Even big leaders of South Sudan are met by junior officials of the governing NCP party, to our dismay. The CPA will be derailed if this continues.

With the present economy in Sudan, can the points be met financially? The government says we can solve our problems, but this has not yet been seen by the world.

A: I never said that GoSS is supplying rebel movements, I said it is a claim that has been made. There are many rebel movement officers in Juba. Regarding the CPA, I would love to talk about it, but at all of the meetings of the Border Committee the SPLM has regularly absented itself. We wanted to put work ahead of the interim period, but there is an SPLM component in Parliament which has rejected it. We would not like to see the issue of border demarcation slide, but it is GoSS which is procrastinating on the issue.

Q: On the BBC last night were three people sent by JEM to Doha, to see how they will resume negotiations.

A: We wished for them to join on terms accepted in the past, there will not be a new process for them, they were part of it. The process has been monopolised for JEM. If they wish to join without putting down new terms, they may do so. But if they wish to join to cause delaying tactics, such as demanding a new timetable, this is something we will object to because we want all focus to be on the CPA.

Q: You have spoken of inclusiveness and learning from Abuja. Are there any steps to bring Abdel-Aziz Khalid in, or is he seen as a spoiler?

A: I object to the personalisation of the peace process. The last time I spoke to them I told them this. The peace process is bigger than that. I don't think, personally, that it is a make or break issue. We have seen him, and he used to command some influence. He is losing his field commanders, and is now negotiating with the government. By the way we have been active in talking

directly to the commanders. I do not think he will join because he is enjoying his life in Paris very much. I do not think that French pressure will make him join.

Q: I think you are in a similar position as in Abuja, where the attitude was that if we have one rebel group, we do not need the others. You are not allowing JEM back into Darfur, which makes it seem as though you are purposefully trying to undermine the movements.

A: They are attacking our people, using arms against our soldiers.

Q: No one is going to resolve our issues but us. It is time we say enough is enough, lets bring a comprehensive peace. Sudan is a big country with resources and manpower, so why should its people suffer? It is important that this time we put politics aside. The people of Sudan are generous, and they need to translate it to support for the government. The only problem is at a governmental level, where people are not like that. The Government of National Unity (GoNU) and the NCP need to come up with a strategy for comprehensive peace. They need to include everyone to bring peace, at the moment it will be an NCP peace with Darfur allies.

You raised the point that most rebel movements have offices in Juba. But they wanted to unite for peace like the SPLM did. There is a need to look for a holistic solution. It is very important that the GoNU works together.

A: I share your sentiments. The last thing they can accuse the government of doing is being reluctant to reach a settlement. It was a courageous decision to sign the CPA. We did sign a peace agreement in Darfur, but it was ruined by others. If the history of Southern Sudan is looked at, you can see that we cannot be accused of being reluctant. We have not been helped by those we should have.

Q: In reference to the peace process in Doha, what can we be doing on the UK's part? How do you envisage ways of enhancing the results from Doha?

A: Before we finalise the document, I want to reemphasise the need for consultations. It is not those who take up arms who are the most important players. They take up arms because of their lack of political weight. They failed to gain one single constituency in Darfur, and so they are not representative which is why the consultation phase is so important. Once we reach a settlement, my own view of the issue is that if we could reach an agreement by the end of November, we should make the agreement available for people to sign up. I do not consider JEM the main players, but to gain a complete picture it would be good for them to be involved. I am open to the

idea of incorporating into the constitution agreement. Our strategy is dynamic, so if the agreement brings in new factors, the agreement will be supreme over any other policy drafted by the government.

Q: There are divisions within the Islamic movement in Darfur, as shown by the election results in south Darfur. How would a reconciliation of the Islamic movement contribute to a peaceful settlement in Darfur? What is the political constituency from which peace can be drawn?

A: The issue is difficult because the Islamic movement is different to what it was in the past, as are the key figures. I do not see it as a particular factor here. It is a renegade tactic and I do not see any reconciliation between factions of the Islamic movement. They are not people of the soil.

Q: The word 'spoilers' was used by Barack Obama in a speech at the 24th September meeting in New York. When Abuja was signed before, the international community said whoever does not sign it will be severely reprimanded. So far this has not happened, so is the international community lenient on spoilers?

A: Some members of the international community have abetted rebels, which is why we have to include sections of the agreement and move to protect it. I am more hopeful than before. People have recognised the negative impact of spoilers which is why we make sure we have readiness and seriousness.

Ends.