



PRESS RELEASE

PEACE FORUM ORGANIZED BY AU LIAISON OFFICE IN DAMAZIN, BLUE NILE STATE

Damazin, 8th December 2013: The AU Liaison Office in the Sudan and its implementing partners, Sudan University of Science & Technology- Centre for Studies & Culture of Peace (SUST-CSCP), as well as the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), conducted a three - day Peace Building Forum in Damazin, Blue Nile State from 6th – 8th December 2013, in support of the Peace Building Process in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States. The forum, funded by the AU Commission, through the Peace Strengthening Projects (PSP) initiative, is part of the activities in the mandate of the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, intended to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation at the grassroots level of the Sudanese society. The event drew 130 participants from the localities of Roseres, Baw, Algtadamon, Gassan, Alkuromk and Aldamazen in Blue Nile State, and 70 participants from Kadugli and other parts of South Kordofan State.

The Head of the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, Mahmoud Kane, in his key note address in the opening ceremony, highlighted the role of the AU in mediation and facilitation efforts for conflict resolution in Sudan, spearheaded by the AU High Level Implementation Panel, chaired by the former President Mr. Thabo Mbeki, as well as the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur. He stated that the Nation of Sudan is of strategic importance to the continent and, therefore, its peace, security and stability are a matter of priority. He further emphasised that ultimately the responsibility of peace and stability in Sudan lies with the Sudanese themselves and, for this reason, the objectives of the forum is, among other things, to create a forum for all the stakeholders of the Two Areas, especially at the grassroots level, to share experiences on the conflict and the possible ways of mitigation.

The colourful opening ceremony was graced by the Governor of Blue Nile State, Mr. Hussein Yasin Hamad Habusurwal who said that the sole desire of the Government is to achieve peace, and announced the existence of amnesty that was decreed by the President of the Republic of Sudan for the armed groups, and thereafter declared the Forum officially open.

Throughout the forum, participants spoke candidly on matters affecting their well being, as a result of the conflict in the Two Areas. Working in smaller interest groups, participants drew a number of recommendations that could help in mitigating the conflict. The recommendations were read and agreed upon at the closing ceremony.

In the closing ceremony, Mr. Sam Onapa, representing the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, lauded the participants for their enthusiasm during the entire forum duration and urged the stakeholders to consider a two - pronged approach to this process, the first being resolving the current conflict and the second being working towards preventing new conflicts. In his closing remarks, Commissioner Herzalla Abdalla who represented the Governor gave his compliments to the AU and its partners for conducting the forum in Blue Nile State and stated that peaceful settlement of the conflict would be the only way forward, adding that a comprehensive ceasefire would not be achieved unless the peace talks proceed. He further reaffirmed the necessity of amnesty for armed groups in order to bolster the peace building process. He acknowledged the outcome of the forum's concluding statement and hoped that under the auspices of the African Union, the outcomes would be adopted by government, as a solid basis for future peace talks.