

EIRFeature

Sudan takes giant step toward democracy, peace

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Six thousand five hundred delegates, from every geographical region, ethnic group, and religious belief, filled the enormous outdoor hall, covered by brightly colored tents, behind Friendship Hall, a huge building for conferences, which was, however, too small to accommodate the gathering. For four days, the participants engaged in an intense direct debate with the highest authority of the country, the President, coming up to the microphone one by one, to pose questions and make recommendations relative to the urgent economic, social, and political problems facing the country.

The extraordinary event took place Feb. 16-19, in Khartoum, capital of Sudan, which is Africa's largest country. It was the second session of the National Congress, representing constituency groups from all over the country, such as trade unions, farmers, women, youth, students, businessmen, herdsman, and workers. It elects 125 people from within its ranks, to send to the National Assembly, or Parliament. Organized on the grassroots level, in local congresses, it is articulated at all levels, through town, state, and Federal congresses. The National Congress meets every two years, to thrash out economic, social, and other policy issues.

This session marked a watershed in the history of the country, because it consolidated major progress along two fronts: the peace process, overcoming the decades-long war which has raged between the government and southern-based rebels; and, the process of establishing democratic institutions. In the course of the deliberations, a new leadership to the National Congress was elected, which integrated former rebel and opposition figures into the governing body. Thus, directly under President Gen. Omar al-Bashir, who was re-elected chairman of the body, two deputy chairmen were elected: Dr. Riek Machar, the former Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) rebel leader, who has joined with the government in a peace agreement, and Al-Sharif Zeinal-Abdin al-Hindi, the secretary general of the Sudanese Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), one of the



Dr. Hassan al-Turabi (right), the newly elected secretary general of the Sudanese National Congress, receives Uwe Friesecke and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach of EIR and the Schiller Institute, in Khartoum, February 1998.

opposition parties, which, together with the Umma, makes up the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

To appreciate the significance of these elections, it is important to recall that the British strategy of destabilizing Sudan has been based on using the combined forces of the NDA and the remaining SPLA rebel forces under John Garang, as a political-military alliance against the government. Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords Baroness Caroline Cox, who is British intelligence case officer for Sudan, personally brought about the alliance between the two political parties, and the SPLA military wing, in Asmara, Eritrea in 1995. In November 1995, Cox organized a conference at the House of Lords, which endorsed the NDA and its explicit program of overthrowing the Khartoum government by any means, including violence.

By electing Dr. Machar and Sharif al-Hindi to the National Congress leadership, the Sudanese delegates have signalled their commitment to peace and reconciliation, dealing a mortal blow to British plans. Nor is their election to a leadership position to be misunderstood as a token gesture. Dr. Machar accepted the post, as he accepted the position as chairman of the Coordinating Council for the ten southern states, as an expression of his endorsement of the peace treaty with the government. And Sharif Al-Hindi, as he explains in an interview to *EIR*, published in this package, posed specific conditions for returning to Khartoum, which were accepted by the government. In addition, he presented to the National Congress a comprehensive position paper, the National Politi-

cal Charter, which was discussed and incorporated into the final statement of the conference. As he said during a press conference, the Bashir government “has not asked us to change our skins,” but has welcomed the former opposition groups back to take part in the political process.

Another major development during the conference, was the presentation by Dr. Hassan al-Turabi, who was elected to be secretary general of the organization, of the outlines of the new Constitution. This Constitution must be accepted by the President and Parliament, and put to a referendum nationally. The process is expected to begin when the National Assembly convenes from March 9 to April 1, and to be completed by June 30, 1998.

One crucial feature of the Constitution draft, is its incorporation of the April 1997 peace treaty, as a whole. Thus, peace with the south becomes a part of constitutional law. The Constitution also allows for the freedom of political association and organization. This, it was explained by Dr. Turabi following the conference, means that political parties will be allowed in Sudan, on condition that they, like the National Congress, be representative of all ethnic, religious, social, and geographical groups in the country. Sectarian, religious, or regionally based parties will not be allowed, according to a statute which is to be published soon.

With this step, the Sudanese political leadership has effectively eliminated the last pretext used by both rebel forces under Garang and the political opposition parties, Umma and DUP, to continue their state of belligerency.

In interviews with *EIR* reporters, who were among the 27 journalists and 65 invited guests at the conference, both Dr. Machar and Sharif al-Hindi expressed their confidence, that other opposition figures would be encouraged by their example, to return to Sudan and seek reconciliation and peace. They included the president of the DUP, Mohammad Othman Mirghani; Umma party leader Sadiq al-Mahdi; and even the recalcitrant John Garang. Al-Hindi said that he would convey the National Charter to “brothers abroad, in Europe and the U.S.A. and the whole world.” He added, “I will sign, and will say that the secretary general [Mirghani] should sign.”

Freedom of political association

The question of political party organization was hotly debated during the National Congress, as numerous delegates recalled the tragic failure of the multi-party system in Sudan’s earlier history: sectarian parties with no semblance of internal democratic ordering, and no representation of the country’s vast ethnic, religious, and geographical variety, had repeatedly failed, and been replaced by military coups. As one delegate from the north stressed in his intervention the first day, “What we need is a political system which is capable of leading the country, whether it has political parties or not.”

Sudan prepares its Constitution

In his address to the National Congress, Secretary General-elect Dr. Hassan al-Turabi presented the outlines of Sudan’s new Constitution. According to a summary in English issued by the Sudanese News Agency, SUNA, “The principles indicate that the constitution is not an imported experience from certain sources that have their own experiences, and reflects [the role of] religion in organizing public life that emanates from the believers and not from a monopolizing authority, in which all are equal in assuming leadership without discrimination and in which all enjoy absolute freedom to choose their beliefs and to express them through rites.

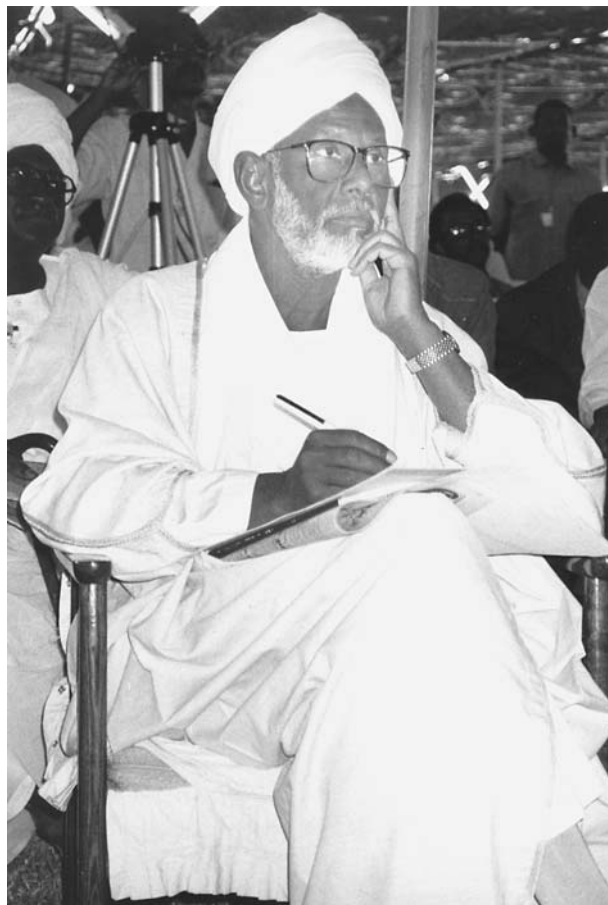
“The constitution contains guiding principles to guide those who assume the affairs of the people to religious objectives to boost development and justice in all aspects of life and where freedom is the hope that shall not be undermined by dictatorship and unjust order, with affirmation of the citizens’ right of expression and political association, taking into consideration general directives including unity in public life, for evading disunity, fanaticism, partisanship and sectarianism.

“The system of government shall be a presidential one and the president shall be elected by the people.”

“The legislation and supervisory role shall be assumed by one council on the federal level and one council on the level of states and locality, whose majority of members are elected directly by the people and the rest elected indirectly in accordance with the law, to represent the various sectors and forces moving the society’s functions.

“The judiciary shall be independent. . . .”

In the final statement issued by the National Congress, it mentioned in addition that Dr. Turabi had noted that the



Dr. Hassan al-Turabi

Constitution guarantees “equitable distribution of power . . . without any domination by any federal or states’ bodies,” and “peace in the south shall be incorporated with its inherent systems and rules in the constitution. Rules and legal and administrative arrangements incorporated in the Khartoum and Fashoda peace agreement shall be valid till they get implemented. . . .”



A scene at the National Congress. On the front row, left, is President Gen. Omar al-Bashir; two seats to the right is Dr. Hassan al-Turabi.

While receiving the *EIR* delegation, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, explained the process Sudan has gone through since 1989, as “evolution,” rather than “revolution.” The first parliament following General al-Bashir’s coming to power, he recalled, was appointed; the second parliament was elected, but not on a party basis. Similarly, with state governors: First they were appointed; after three years, candidates were nominated by the President, and then approved; now, they are elected officials. Now, “we are going to take the final step,” he said, which can be open to a multi-party system.” But, he specified, “these cannot be parties based on religious sects or tribal lines; they must be open to all religions and groups.” Dr. Mustafa said that the National Congress session had developed the model of a party, on which others could be shaped.

The economic dimension of independence

The other leading issue in the general debate and in the workshops, was economic policy. Particularly strong were the interventions from farmers and herdsman, who demanded more government action to strengthen agriculture and husbandry. In the economics workshop, the focus of discussion was on the need to harmonize economic policy with the moral orientation embedded in Islam, and to guarantee equitable wealth-sharing and taxation. The cooperatives, which represent a particularly strong sector, argued for tax breaks. Privatization was also discussed, and the consensus was to maintain state control over strategic sectors of the economy, and proceed with privatization cautiously, particularly in light of the recent disastrous experience of the “Asian tigers.”

Sudan has been fighting to defend its political independence and sovereignty, particularly since 1989, when the current government under Gen. Omar al-Bashir took power. The British-directed assault on the country has come in the form of military attacks, from Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia, and political subversion, through Baroness Cox and her puppets in the NDA. Cox’s primary activity has been to spread lies about Sudan, alleging the practice of slavery, religious persecution and terrorism, in order to motivate political bodies, like the U.S. Congress and the United Nations, to pass legislation imposing economic sanctions on Sudan. The leading edge of Cox’s campaign for sanctions has been to impose an oil boycott and an arms embargo. Due to efforts such as hers, Sudan has been isolated from the “international community,” and has received no financial aid, for example from the International Monetary Fund, since 1989. It has been subjected to embargoes and a general credit cutoff. Thus, the fight for political independence has comprehended also a struggle for economic sovereignty.

Just on the heels of the National Congress proceedings, another event occurred which signalled progress towards achieving economic independence. On Feb. 22, a ceremony was held in the Friendship Hall in Khartoum, for the signing of contracts related to a new pipeline, which will transport oil from fields in the southwest, to Port Sudan. The ceremony was attended by General al-Bashir as well as Dr. Machar, representing the south. Several nested contracts were signed by representatives of the Chinese CPECC, the Argentine Technint, the British WEIR, and Allen Diesel. In attendance as well were representatives of the Greater Nile Petroleum

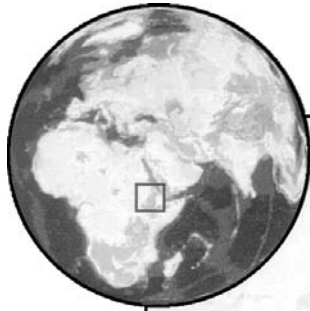
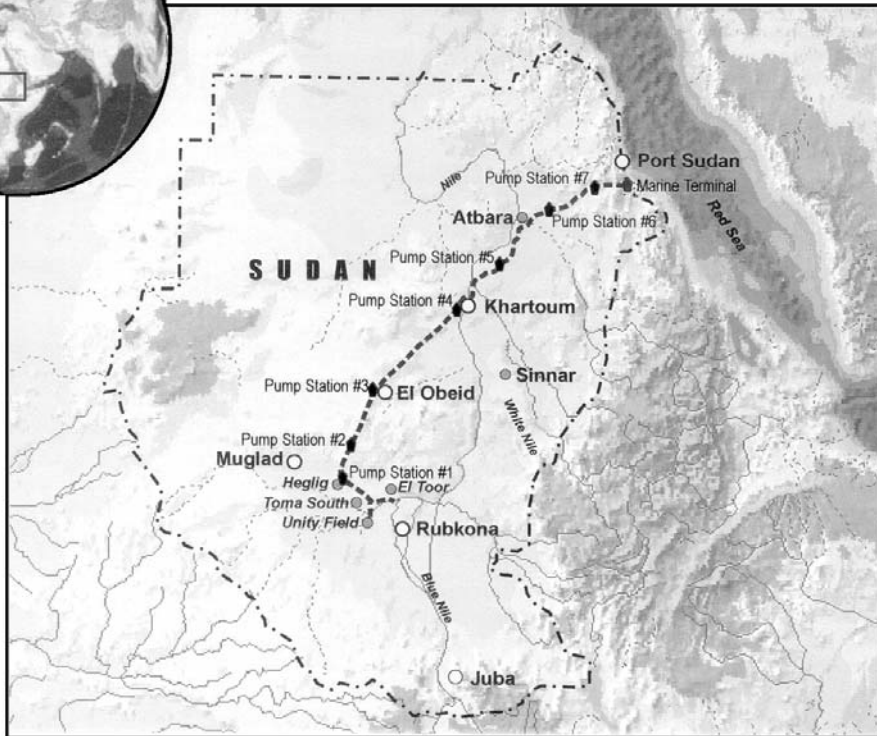


FIGURE 1
Sudan's new pipeline project



leum industry and the national economy of Sudan.” A spokesman of the CNPC of China, the country’s state oil company, lauded the government of Sudan’s commitment to the pipeline project, saying it would take Sudan “into a new era.” The CNPC, he said, as the largest shareholder in the consortium, was fully aware of the “great challenge” it represents, and added, “We will never give up” in implementing the “momentous project,” which “will make the dream of the Sudanese nation come true.”

Indeed, the pipeline project will make Sudan’s dream come true. Not only will it make the country self-sufficient in oil, thus eliminating the \$350 million annual oil bill it now pays to import oil on

Operating Company, the consortium behind the effort. These included CNPC of China, Petronas of Malaysia, SPC of Canada, and Sudapet of Sudan.

The pipeline is to be 1,610 kilometers long and 28 inches in diameter. Once the \$600 million project is completed, it will carry 150,000 barrels per day of crude oil. The Sudanese plan to increase production to 200,000 bpd by the year 2000, in order to be able to cover domestic needs (50,000 bpd) and export the rest.

An official of the Energy and Mining Ministry explained that the project includes building a factory for pipeline production, in Khartoum. The crude oil will go to El Obeid and to Khartoum, where part of it will be refined to cover domestic needs, and the rest will be exported. The second refinery, near Khartoum, is to be built by the Chinese and Sudanese together. The \$1.2 billion investment made through the consortium, involves a product-sharing scheme, whereby once expenses have been covered, investors will hold 20%. The pipeline will be transferred to the government of Sudan after 15 years. As the rate of production increases, the share to the consortium will decrease.

This pipeline represents an enormous boost to Sudan’s development perspectives. As the Chinese representative of the CPECC said, in his remarks at the ceremony, “The project carries great significance for the development of the petro-

the international markets. When Sudan begins to export, this will double the country’s GDP.

The Chinese have been the most important partners in the effort. In their exploration, they have had 100% success; every time they have dug a well, they have found oil. Some 120-140 wells have been dug, and 10,000 are planned, to be able to identify the actual amount of reserves, which is believed to be very vast.

The oil pipeline and related projects, such as the refinery, will break through Sudan’s production bottlenecks, and provide the import earnings required to finance many development projects planned, among them, the Jonglei Canal. As the representative of Sudapet, the Sudanese consortium member, said, “The project will provide the missing link” in the oil chain. Up to now, there has been no means of carrying the oil to markets, whether for domestic consumption, or for export.

The timetable set for the project is very tight and ambitious, but the Energy and Mining Minister Dr. Awad Al-Jaz promised that it would be met, by June 1999. Dr. Al-Jaz also made a point of stressing that Sudan was open to economic cooperation with all companies from all countries, and he included those which have appeared to be hostile to it, like the United States. In fact, he specifically invited the United States to invest in the country’s oil sector.

National political charter

The following are excerpts from the National Political Charter of the Sudanese National Congress, prepared by the Committee of National Thought.

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Charters and principles are usually designed in accordance with the size and building of men, and Sudan's political and social building is unique and seated on the peak of glory. It is a product of an Arab-Islamic marriage in an African melting-pot framed in a unique size. The political charter, which binds the different parts of people of Sudan together and does not deviate from this structure which God has bestowed upon this country and its inhabitants, is written in conformity with this fact.

The unanimity reached by the Sudanese thought in the National Thought Committee which emerged from the initiative of Al-Sharif Zein-el-Abdin Al-Hindi, is open to the right of any Sudanese citizen to express his views. The National Thought Committee presents the Sudanese people the Political Charter emerging from the Political Declaration and the directions formed by the National Thought Committee in view of the cultural, social, political, and economic foundations and the best choices for achieving the harmonic national unity.

1. Social development

The people of Sudan realize through their cultures and educational methods, that ethnic and cultural diversity is a plus for the interaction of the nation and not a source of division. Thus, the treatment of the social and political charter will concentrate on making this diversity in all its manifestations a source of unity and solidarity. Citizenship, which has become the basis of the social, political, and economic structure, conditions all the different practices between rights and duties. It is also required that there should be a serious effort to melt the elements of this diversity together into a real unity, such that the elements of the state become united and become the holder of the equal, collective, and joint right to the ownership of the country and taking advantage of the investments in it for the common interest without monopoly, and according to the first principle rights to housing, health care and education, which is the first step to the world of social solidarity for the public. This should be linked to the obligatory duty of defending the security of the country and the unity of its population and protecting

its interests against any aggressor.

The family is the kernel of society, and the institution which produces the generations. The family should be protected against homelessness and disintegration, and kindergartens, child care centers and family development centers [should] proliferate.

Woman must be liberated from the declining traditions and the practices that have disabled her from taking her role in society. The doors must be opened for her truthful participation in the [development] of the homeland within the values of religion and society.

Societies are protected through the implementation of values, protection of resources, education and the control of the elements of society. However, the traditional popular system should also be protected and utilized to take its role in administration and production, and to raise the level of the tribe as an active and productive unit supporting stability not opposing it. All this requires a cultural system underlying this diversity and admitting that the state of knowledge and technology is the protector of the social system from disintegration.

The people of Sudan realize their role in the mission of the divine assignment [the divine assignment is God's appointment to man to build the world as a vicegerent of God] in the past, present and the future, and understand its dimensions for the coming generations. The crown of all that, is the freedom of all the creatures of God which they acquired through their submission to God alone. God has endowed man with this freedom and carried him around the world and on the surface of the sea and endowed him with the blessed goods, Reason through which man can contemplate the creation of the heavens and earth. Man made a covenant to embrace that Reason, then stood to reconstruct the universe, in order to realize the wisdom behind his creation.

Any practice undermining man's freedom and reason deprives him of the honor of the assignment and plunges him into injustice and ignorance. On the foundations of Reason and thought, we are inspired that all [human] creatures are all children under God's caring; the most beloved by God are those who are most beneficial to His children. All religion is from God (praise be to Him), and it is all emerging from the Abrahamic truth that God is one.

2. Economic and social revival

Man is made vicegerent on earth through the building and the protection of the blessings of God. God's endowment of wealth implies a commitment to justice in distributing the wealth among the people and securing the needs of human beings. The state is obliged to limit the differences between sectors of society without violating public rights and private property.

a) Man is the goal and the means of economic revival, and therefore, should be developed, educated and cultivated



Guests and delegates at the Second National Congress in Khartoum, Sudan. Inset: Sudan's President Gen. Omar al-Bashir, with ceremonial cane, at an impromptu rally during the meeting of the National Congress.



to enable him/her to carry out his/her responsibilities.

b) Emphasizing the method of self-reliance and exploring the human and material potentials, while opening for the world and coordinating with it in giving and taking for the independence of the nation's decision and preserving its national sovereignty.

c) Emphasizing the freedom of economic, commercial and service activity and all forms of investments without administrative limitations, and on the basis of justice and equality . . . through liberating the economy from limitations and moving it through releasing the potentials of those who are capable of participating in its activities.

d) Equality among the people in economic activity on the basis of economic potential and technical and administrative qualifications, and abiding by the state's laws and general directions.

e) Work is a value as well as a right, and service is an expression of human existence. Every Sudanese citizen is to be given the opportunity to work and to be protected from homelessness and terror. Meanwhile, civilian service must become the conditioner of the production process, and its notion should be developed to a "labor force" which is

employed in production according to development projects.

f) Building the infrastructure for the population's living, and establishing the basic services for the economic activity in production, commerce and services, and developing its technologies.

g) Concentrating on the promising and renewable resources on and below the earth's surface, and concentration on housing, security and the foundations of prosperity.

h) Concentrating on increasing the productivity in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, energy, industry, mining and social services.

i) Since industry and industrial technology are the basis of development and prosperity, the wide-ranging industrial sector (energy, mining, transformational industry and information industry) must have the greatest contribution in the national product, and be the leader for the other economic sectors.

j) In view of globalization and the openness of trade among nations, our goals should be to reach a status in the world corresponding to our resources and potentials which enable us to assume an advanced position in the world market, especially in providing food to the peoples of the Arab,

Islamic and African nations. The entry to globalization should start from a rational regional basis.

k) Regarding the criteria of technical and economic efficiency and the demographic structure as the main indices of distributing the economic and social development among the States and regions [of Sudan].

l) The ultimate goal of founding the economic and social revival is to remove the economic suffering which has characterized Sudanese society to this very day. This suffering has had no justification to be accepted by the Sudanese people. Since this economic crisis has aggravated now, the current economic development projects should have a major effect in reducing the hardships of living. The state, according to this Charter, should resort to the policy of studied support of the most suffering sectors of the society.

3. Political development

Political consciousness in Sudan is old as well as deep. The Sudanese, through their culture, education and love of knowledge, have enjoyed a rich political consciousness. This was increased due to Sudan's location among different cultures and political caravans. Therefore, this country witnessed a political movement with diverse attitudes of which different political parties were born. These parties contributed a great deal to developing the political and social life, but were not void of shortcomings. The result was a disturbed political practice and unstable governments. Therefore, we have to learn the lessons from that past and take advantage of the nationalist experience, and continue the search for a political practice which provides an opportunity for meeting with open hearts, for the sake of solving all the problems.

a) **The political system:**

Since freedom and unity necessarily lead to the freedom of political practice and political organizing, the political system will be based on a method of peaceful and willful exchange of power enabling all the people to organize, elect and run as candidates, and taking national responsibility according to the foundations inspired by the fundamental directions enlisted in the political declaration of the National Thought Committee which ensure the economic freedom, social justice, independence of the justice system, and freedom of political organizing. The freedom of political organizing is the cornerstone of democratic practice, on condition that this is carried out according to principles preserving the country's unity and identity, and should be in conformity with a regulatory law. Here, it should be clarified that the old political practice with its mistakes and sins is rejected. Moreover, any attempt to close the doors and gates for a wider participation or limiting organizing to a certain group under whatever pretext, is a fruitless attempt without any justification, because it is against the logic of reality and the necessities of the present. For that reason, wider participation is a recommended virtue.

b) **Foreign relations:**

Foreign relations are an embodiment of the internal (domestic) for the better or the worse. The elements of the official diplomacy and popular work in our country is called on to move effectively and actively into the various axes through which Sudan is historically, geographically or culturally connected; these are: the Arab axis, the African axis, the Islamic axis, the non-alignment axis and the international axis.

In this period, when unipolarity is repeated under the new world order led by the United States, we must strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and friendship with all the states that are committed to preserving their relations with us. We need to rely on our foreign relations to improve our relations with neighboring states, and move from mere diplomatic exchange to cooperation in the economic, political, cultural and social fields in the form which best serves our national unity and development.

The Egyptian-Sudanese unique relationship occupies a special place and extreme significance in this Charter. It should free itself from the traditional form to crystalize beyond mere integration to unity within the framework of economy, security and society, and we must turn the Nile valley, the cradle of civilization, into a pot carrying the aspirations of the two peoples towards a productive relationship and a major economic power with strategic, economic, security and political depth.

We should endeavor with our brothers and friends to strengthen the regional organizations such as the Arab League, Organization of African Unity, Organization of Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Organization, and act through these to oppose all forms of injustice and oppression suffered by some states due to the double standards of the major powers dealing with the other . . . and to give a hand to our brothers who are suffering from the injustice and embargo in Palestine, Iraq, Libya and others.

We must appreciate the hand stretched towards us from Asian states such as Malaysia, Korea and China and others, and from European states such as Russia, France and Germany and others, in order to strengthen our stances and positions in international fora, and benefit from their potentials and experience in reconstruction and modernization.

c) **Peace:**

Peace is a precondition for stability, and peace must always remain the aim. We should bring it to a stable state leading to the stability of this nation and putting an end to the fighting. We should turn to political, social and economic reconstruction to make it the preoccupation of the people of Sudan, where they can create growth and development so that injustice vanish and just distribution of wealth and power prevail, and people will be employed in production. People in both the north and the south should put all their efforts for the choice of a unified Sudan.