

Statement by Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan at the International Donors' Conference for the Development and Reconstruction of Darfur: Cairo, Egypt: March 21, 2010.

Co-Chairpersons, Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Turkey,
The Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen:

First of all we would like to commend the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Governments of the Republics of Egypt and Turkey for the initiative to convene this important Conference.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to all the delegates present here for responding positively to the invitation to attend this donors' conference, thus demonstrating their determination to help the people of Sudan and Darfur to resolve the challenges they face.

The presence of the many delegations here constitutes evidence of the common understanding we share that development and reconstruction constitutes a critically important part of the peaceful solution of the conflict in Darfur.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the violent conflict which broke out in Darfur in 2003 has caused great harm in terms of the numbers of people killed, injured and displaced as well as in terms of the destruction of social infrastructure.

This has put an additional burden on a region of Sudan which was and is in any case suffering from the blight of poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation.

Indeed it was this marginalisation, leading to underdevelopment and all its consequences, that was the root cause of the conflict in Darfur.

Chairperson;

Having spent a considerable period of time interacting with and listening to the people of Darfur, including the Internally Displaced and the Refugees, we can testify that the people of Darfur are united in their desire for peace now!

They are hungry for a peace settlement which does not merely consist in the absence of war. In this regard, we welcome the positive developments towards the resolution of the Darfur conflict that is being made under the auspices of the Doha negotiations.

Rather they seek a peace which would signify an end to the marginalisation of Darfur within the Sudanese polity, and therefore the possibility for the region to participate in an equitable national system of power and wealth sharing.

This, in turn, would lead to its all round development in conditions in which the challenges of justice and reconciliation would have been addressed.

It is for this reason that we are especially happy that this Conference has convened with the specific purpose to generate the resources Darfur needs for its reconstruction and development. In this regard we must commend the generous pledge already made by the State of Qatar.

Darfur needs these resources to rebuild the infrastructure that has been destroyed. When this challenge is addressed, it will serve as an important element of the reparations that are due to the people of Darfur and constitute an important part of the very necessary process of reconciliation which must underpin a durable peace.

But Darfur also needs these resources to embark on the road to reconstruction and development which, by eliminating the root cause of the violent conflict that broke out in 2003, will help to guarantee that the people of Darfur shall never again be subjected to the ravages of war.

It is also clear to us that the development challenge in Darfur is of a magnitude whose resolution will require more than the resources at the disposal of the Sudanese government and people alone.

This conference communicates this reality while at the same time sending a message about the importance of human solidarity. It should serve as an example of how all of us should respond practically, to contribute to finding a lasting solution to the conflict in Darfur and the long-term stability of Sudan as a whole.

Between April this year and January 2011, Sudan will take critical steps that will determine her future; these being the April 2010 General Elections and the January 2011 South Sudan Referendum.

These steps encapsulate many challenges, not the least important of which is the development challenge. The sister people of Sudan need all the assistance they can muster to overcome these challenges, bearing in mind that, in the end, only they are the masters of their own destiny.

None of us present here needs any reminder about the importance of Sudan to the African Continent, the Near East and indeed, the world. We mention this to emphasise the point that we dare not fail to assist Sudan during her hour of need. This is because such failure, were it to be allowed to occur, would have serious negative consequences for generations to come.

We are however certain that this conference will succeed to generate the necessary resources to assist the people of Sudan in their development efforts.

We wish the conference success in its work.

Thank you.