

# UNAMID BULLETIN

## IDPs, Refugees Discuss Return and Resettlement at South Darfur Conference



*Internally displaced persons from across Darfur, as well as refugees living in neighboring countries, attend a two-day conference in Nyala, South Darfur, to discuss pressing issues. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

**M**ore than 400 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from across Darfur, as well as refugees living in neighboring countries, came together for a two-day conference in Nyala, South Darfur, to discuss several pressing issues, including return and resettlement.

The forum, which concluded on 26 March, was organized within the framework of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), which stipulates that all stakeholders in the Darfur peace process be able to share their views and contribute to that process.

Participants presented proposals on a host of issues, including voluntary return and resettlement; peace and security; compensation, reparation and restitution for property; land rights, natural resources and nomadic routes; humanitarian aid; and the rights of women and children.

Addressing the conference, Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) Chairperson Tijani Seisi identified voluntary returns as a top priority of the DRA. Urging people to spread values of cohesion and tolerance, he noted that tribal clashes only serve to destabilize peaceful coexistence and the social fabric of Darfur's communities.

Speaking on behalf of Ms. Aichatou Mindaoudou, the Acting Joint Special Representative of the African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Mr. Mohamed B. Yonis, the Mission's Deputy Joint Special Representative, stated that the continued displacement of people in Darfur breeds human suffering and impedes development. He noted that the conference is important because it brings together key stakeholders to map out a strategy to facilitate the return and resettlement of those displaced.

The forum resulted in agreement by the attending IDPs and refugees on several recommendations, including the formation of a committee to follow the implementation of the recommendations in partnership with the DRA's Voluntary Return and Resettlement

Commission.

Other stakeholders taking part in the event included representatives of civil society groups, native administrations, non-governmental organizations, the Sudanese Government, United Nations agencies and UNAMID. ■



*Participants from across Darfur at the Nyala conference. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*



## AU Peace and Security Council Assesses Darfur Situation

Humanitarian aid, civilian protection and criminal elements were among the central issues raised in a 17-19 March visit to Sudan by the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC).

The mission of the 24 members of the AUPSC, led by Ambassador Bulus Paul Zom Lolo of Nigeria, was to gain a first-hand assessment of the situation in Darfur. This assessment was carried out largely through direct engagement with stakeholders at all levels, including the Government, Sudanese civilians and the international community working in Darfur. The first day of the visit was spent in talks in Khartoum with Sudan Foreign Minister Ali Karti and African Ambassadors. There, issues focused on greater humanitarian access to areas of conflict, increased protection of women and children, and the urgency to address indiscriminate attacks against African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) peacekeepers. These concerns were echoed in subsequent meetings with additional stakeholders during the next

two days in Darfur. On 18 March, the delegation traveled to El Fasher, North Darfur, where its members met with Assistant Darfur Regional Authority Chairperson Yasin Abdurahman Yosef, North Darfur Deputy Wali (Governor) Alfateh Abdalziz, and UNAMID leadership.

Mr. Yosef expressed his gratitude for the AU's role in the mediation process in support of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and in assisting with the Nyala conference for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Ambassador Lolo praised the work of the Authority while commending those parties who have signed the DDPD and noting that the AUPSC wants to see Sudan "re-engaged with the world." In the delegation's meeting with the Deputy Wali, the Sudanese official expressed hope that non-signatory parties will join the peace process.



Deputy UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Mohamed Yonis, and the chairman of the AU delegation, Ambassador Bulus Paul Zom Lolo of Nigeria, at El Fasher airport. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

The Council then traveled to Nyala, South Darfur to meet with IDPs, South Darfur Wali Hamad Ismail, and UNAMID officials.

At the Otash IDP camp, community leaders expressed their wish for peace and their desire to return to their places of origin. Ambassador Lolo assured them of the AU's commitment while urging traditional leaders to lead the peace efforts and to continue to serve as role models to youth in the

camps. He noted that the tour of the camp allowed the AUPSC "the opportunity to reflect and see the challenges that need to be addressed with their own eyes."

In their meeting with the Wali, Mr. Ismail expressed his gratitude to UNAMID for its assistance in rendering aid to all parties in the Doha peace process. He further spoke of the IDP conference in Nyala as a prerequisite for the Doha Donors Conference set for next month.

## Darfur Civil Society Debates Role in Democratic Governance

At a workshop on 17 March in El Fasher, North Darfur, nearly 100 representatives of civic organizations in Darfur debated the role civil society plays in democratic governance.

The forum, facilitated by the African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), drew participants from political parties, camps for internally displaced people, native administration groups, educational institutions, nomadic networks, the legal community, media, and

women's unions. The meeting's participants discussed ways civil society organizations can more effectively promote, strengthen and practice democratic values.

UNAMID's Civil Affairs officers have planned to conduct similar seminars in different localities across North Darfur. As part of its mandate, the Mission regularly hosts such meetings and workshops to encourage discussion of democratic themes related to peace, security and development in Darfur.



Representatives of civic organizations attend the debate organized at UNAMID headquarters. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.