Painting for peace and love for fine art:
An interview with Artist Elfadil Abdulrahman:
IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1  UNAMID JSR’s remarks at the opening ceremony of the Sudan Peace Talks in Juba, South Sudan

PAGE 2  UNAMID supports consultative conferences for IDPs and Darfur civil society for Sudan peace talks

PAGE 3  UNAMID hosts horse-race for peace in central Darfur

PAGE 4  UNAMID JSR’s remarks at the opening ceremony of the Sudan Peace Talks in Juba, South Sudan

PAGE 5  UNAMID Welcomes Framework Agreement between Transitional Government and the Darfur Track

PAGE 6  UNAMID deeply concerned by reports of intercommunal violence in West Darfur

PAGE 7  UNAMID organizes a peaceful coexistence workshop for Darfuri Farmers and Nomads in Zalingei, central Darfur

PAGE 8  UNAMID Tanzanian peacekeepers conduct training on cement brick making for IDPs in South Darfur

PAGE 9  UN State Liaison Functions conclude training on Gender Based Violence for GoS Police Officers and Social Workers in North Darfur

PAGE 10  UNAMID Pakistani contingent conducts awareness raising workshop on COVID-19 in north Darfur

PAGE 11  UNAMID provides logistic support to consultative conferences on Sudan peace process

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12 WOMEN’S
UNAMID Supports Darfur Women Participation in Sudanese (Juba) Peace Talks

14 INTERVIEW
Interview with UNAMID’s new Director, Mission Support Division, Mr. Houston Fergusson.

20 FEATURE
Results of the United Nations Peacebuilding Efforts in Darfur through the State Liaison Function (SLFs)- an innovative transition mechanism from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Darfur.”

26 PHOTO STORY
UNAMID Patrols – Building Trust within host communities in Darfur

30 CULTURE
Painting for peace and love for fine art: An interview with Artist Elfadil Abdulrahman

PAGE 12

WOMEN’S

UNAMID Supports Darfur Women Participation in Sudanese Peace Talks

In another feature entitled: “UNAMID Support to Darfur Women: Participating in Sudanese Peace Talks” focuses on UNAMID’s efforts to support Darfur women to participate in Sudanese peace talks taking place in Juba, South Sudan. To date, the Mission has provided logistical and technical support to the women and organized some consultative conferences in El Fasher as part of the Mission’s facilitation of consultation with stakeholders in Darfur and to offer participants a platform to select their representatives to the Sudanese Peace Talks in Juba.

In another feature entitled: “Results of the United Nations Peacebuilding Efforts in Darfur through the State Liaison Function after SLFs: An innovative transition mechanism from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Darfur”, we highlight the concept of establishing the UN State Liaison Offices (SLFs) in designated peacebuilding areas in north, south, west and east Darfur. UN SLFs programmatic activities are meant to ensure a smooth transition and prevent relapse into conflict and disruption of the peace continuum after UNAMID’s eventual exit from Darfur at the end of October 2020. Establish- ment of these SLFs is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2429 (2018), which en- dorsed a two-pronged approach – peacekeeping in the greater Jebel Marra and peacebuilding in the rest of Darfur.

The collection of photographs in the Photo Story, focuses on UNAMID Patrols: Building Trust with the Host Community in accordance with the Mission’s core mandate of protection of civilians where UNAMID provides daily patrols to assess the situation in the internally displaced camps and villages in its area of responsibility in the Darfur region. Through these short, medium and long range patrols, UNAMID peacekeepers engage the host community as part of the Mission’s confidence building measures.

“Finally, in our cover feature: ‘Painting for peace with love for fine art’, Voices of Darfur presents an interview with 36-year old fine artist, Elfadil Abdulrahman. Born in Jebel Marra area, central Darfur, Elfadil’s passion for fine art started at an early age. He later graduated with a degree in Geography at the University of Zalingei, central Darfur. He currently works as a secondary school teacher in his beloved hometown of Golo, in central Darfur.”

As Voices of Darfur continues to evolve as a news magazine, feel free to send us your feedback. Send your comments by email with “Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur” in the subject line to unamid-publicinformation@un.org

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ON THE COVER

Thousands of people, including women and children, fled from Zalingei town and surrounding villages, attended a Horse Racing Competition organized by UNAMID’s Communications & Public Information Section in partnership with the local Horse Racing Union held in Zalingei, central Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

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UNAMID supports consultative conferences for IDPs and Darfur civil society for Sudan peace talks

El Fasher, north Darfur; The Joint Field Committee (JFC), consisting of the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGoS) and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)- Darfur Track Sudan (TGoS) and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)- Darfur Track of the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGoS) and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)- Darfur Track convened two consultative conferences to identify representatives of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), civil society and Native Administration drawn from all five Darfur States, to participate in the peace talks in Juba, South Sudan. In accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2495 (2019), UNAMID is providing logistical support to the Sudan Peace Commission, TGoS, and SRF-Darfur Track, to organize these two major consultative conferences.

The two Conferences, held under the theme: “Peace First” took place in El Fasher, North Darfur on 30 January and 1 February to discuss ways of unifying views on issues related to the current situation in Darfur and to prioritize issues to be addressed during the peace talks to bring peace and stability to Darfur.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the IDPs Conference, the Wali (Governor) of North Darfur, who also represented the Government of Sudan and other Darfur Walis, Major General Malik El Tayeb Khojali, commended the Joint Field Committee and UNAMID for facilitating the two Conferences, stating that this gesture from all concerned parties, will have a positive impact on the ongoing peace talks in Juba.

Ms. Najat Suleiman, a representative of the Joint Field Committee, commended the Peace and Development Study Centers in the five Darfur states for their commitment to the consolidation of social peace, praising the great role that the native administration continues to play in society, in terms of conflict resolution and promoting harmony and peaceful coexistence among the local communities.

In their remarks, the Directors of the Peace and Development Study Centers in the five Darfur states for their commitment to the consolidation of social peace, praising the great role that the native administration continues to play in society, in terms of conflict resolution and promoting harmony and peaceful coexistence among the local communities. In their remarks, the Directors of the Peace and Development Study Centers in the five Darfur states for their commitment to the consolidation of social peace, praising the great role that the native administration continues to play in society, in terms of conflict resolution and promoting harmony and peaceful coexistence among the local communities.

The convening of the consultative conferences for IDPs and Darfur civil society is in line with the Framework of the Protocol signed by the TGoS and SRF-Darfur Track on 23 December 2019 on aspects related to the participation of IDPs, refugees, civil society and native administration in the peace talks in Juba.

More than two hundred IDPs participated in the IDPs consultation conference and will in turn nominate 50 representatives (25 men and 25 women) to represent them in the peace talks in Juba. An additional 200 participants from Darfur took part in the native administration and civil society stakeholders’ consultation conference, including farmers and herders. They are also set to nominate 50 representatives (25 Native Administration and 25 society stakeholders) to participate in peace talks, currently underway in Juba, South Sudan.

UNAMID hosts horse-race for peace in central Darfur

Zalingei, 14 February; Thousands of people from Zalingei and surrounding villages attended a Horse Racing competition organized by UNAMID Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) in partnership with Zalingei Horse Racing Union in central Darfur. The event held under the theme: “Together for Peace” and attended by UNAMID Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Leonard Ngondi, Government officials and UNAMID staff, was aimed at promoting peace and peaceful coexistence among feuding local communities in the area. Trophies, medals, prizes and promotional material bearing peace messaging were distributed to the winners and other horse riders who participated in the 6-round horse racing competition.

Addressing the gathering, UNAMID Force Commander, General Ngondi underscored the Mission’s keenness to continue its support to such popular sporting activities as part of its contribution towards achievement of sustainable peace, stability and prosperity within different Darfur communities. “Sport is universally acknowledged as a valuable tool in settling differences between communities and promoting a spirit of peaceful coexistence. This is nowhere more evident than in today’s event. I have realised in my time in Darfur, and Sudan in general, that horseracing is a celebration of more than 400 years of chivalry and horsemanship. This makes this sport a unique, defining cultural element that can bring communities together rather than divide them,” General Ngondi added.

In his remarks, Mr. Jibril Younis, the representative of the Wali (Governor) of central Darfur, commended UNAMID for sponsoring the horse racing competition and noted that the ethnically divergent nature of the gathering reflected the tolerance and peaceful coexistence that now exists in central Darfur. Mr. Younis also pledged the Government of Sudan’s readiness to support the upgrading of the horse racing track, in partnership with local and international organizations.

The Chairman of Zalingei Horse Racing Union in central Darfur, Brigadier General, Ali Yagoub, aimed at promoting peace through sport-based initiatives. Many of these initiatives target local communities and create neutral space for the young and old to participate in events that promote peaceful coexistence, cutting across existing barriers and divisions as the Mission prepares for its imminent exit from Darfur. It is worth mentioning that horse racing is one of the most popular sports in Sudan, and Darfur in particular. It has been practiced in the region for more than 400 years.
UNAMID JSR’s Remarks at the opening ceremony of the Sudan Peace Talks in Juba, South Sudan.

Juba, South Sudan 10 December 2019; Under the auspices of the Government of South Sudan, the third round of peace negotiations between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the armed movements represented by the Sudan Revolution Front (SRF) and Sudan People Liberation Movements- North of Abdul Aziz Alhilu and Malik Agar were launched in Juba, South Sudan. UNAMID Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief mediator (JSR/JCM), Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, extended his deep appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of South Sudan for their decision and their courage to take the mantle to facilitate the peace negotiations, adding that the world fully expects all around the negotiating table to demonstrate the requisite leadership, courage and love for Sudan that would result in a positive outcome at the end of this long and cumbersome journey.

“We expect this third round of talks will be the last step in the long journey towards the search for peace, stability and sustainable development for Sudan,” Mamabolo emphasized. Representatives of the armed movements who also spoke at the opening ceremony, commended the good spirit of the peace negotiations and expressed their readiness to continue the talks and their optimism that this round will be decisive especially since the delegation from the Government of Sudan has demonstrated understanding and willingness to cooperate. They urged the regional and international community to continue assisting Sudan to address the challenges facing the transitional period.

The African Union and the Arab League representatives affirmed their support to Sudan’s peace talks and to Juba as the venue of the peace negotiations. They urged the parties to negotiate an agreement that puts an end to war and achieves the aspirations of the Sudanese people who are yearning for durable peace and stability that will facilitate much needed development in Sudan.

UNAMID Welcomes Framework Agreement between Transitional Government and the Darfur Track

Zalingei, 30 December 2019- UNAMID welcomes the framework agreement signed between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Darfur armed movements (Darfur Track) during the peace talks in Juba, South Sudan, on 28 December 2019. The agreement demonstrates progress in advancing the peace process as it outlines key issues and principles that would guide the ongoing negotiations and serves as a basis for a fair and comprehensive peace agreement. UNAMID’s Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator, Jeremiah Mamabolo, commended the signing of the framework agreement and said, “This is a very positive development confirming the political will and readiness of the parties to reach a comprehensive peace agreement. We congratulate the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Darfur parties on this step and encourage them to continue in the same vein.”

“UNAMID shall continue to support the peace talks in Juba in line with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2495 (2019) and within its capability in order to assist all parties to the negotiation process to achieve the ultimate goal of lasting peace and a prosperous future for all the Sudanese people,” Mr. Mamabolo added. UNAMID has provided technical support to all tracks of the Sudanese peace talks in Juba since 10 December 2019. The Mission assumed the role of Secretariat in accordance with UNSCR 2495 which requested UNAMID to provide necessary support to the Transitional Government of Sudan and the armed movements in progressing the peace process.
UNAMID deeply concerned by reports of intercommunal violence in West Darfur

**Zalingei**, 3 January 2020- The African Union – United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is deeply concerned by reports of intercommunal violence in West Darfur that left 65 people dead and approximately 54 injured, displaced thousands of civilian population, destroyed shelters and burnt villages.

UNAMID condemns the violence and stresses the importance of resolving all disputes in a peaceful and amicable manner and calls on all parties to refrain from the use of force, especially against civilian population, including women and children.

In the wake of these egregious intercommunal clashes, UNAMID is deeply concerned about the loss of life and injuries among civilians, widespread displacement and deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in El Geneina and the surrounding area. While the Mission acknowledges the efforts exerted by the Government to contain the situation, it further calls upon the relevant government authorities to maximize their efforts to establish a protective environment and restore peace and order in and around the greater El Geneina community. It is a matter of priority to engender an environment which is conducive to the resumption of uninterrupted humanitarian operations, given the dire needs of the affected population for basic services.

UNAMID would also like to express its most sincere condolences to the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Sudanese Judiciary, and people of Sudan, for the casualties from the crash of a military aircraft taking off from El Geneina Airport on 2 January 2020. UNAMID extends its deepest sympathy to the family of the World Food Programme staff member who perished along with his wife and two children in this accident. UNAMID expresses its sincere condolences to everyone who has been affected by the passing of these individuals. May the memories of your loved ones bring you comfort during this difficult time.

Intercommunal clashes in West Darfur erupted on 29 December. Amid security concerns, as part of measures to ensure the safety and security of UN/UNAMID personnel in El Geneina, UNAMID relocated a total of 32 UN and NGO personnel to Zalingei, Central Darfur. All 32 personnel relocated to Zalingei are currently accommodated at the Mission’s Headquarters and are in good health.

UNAMID organizes a peaceful co-existence workshop for Darfuri Farmers and Nomads in Zalingei, central Darfur

**On 16 December**, more than 80 farmers, nomads, members of civil society and local journalists attended a one-day workshop organized by UNAMID’s Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS), in partnership with the Mission’s Governance and Community Stabilization Section. The workshop, conducted by under the theme: “Darfuri Farmers and Nomads Talking Peace”, was aimed at promoting peaceful co-existence among the local communities, especially during the current harvest season.

During their discussion, the participants appealed for the empowerment of local native administration bodies to maximize their efforts to ensure the safety and security of the affected population. UNAMID’s valuable support to the local crop committees which led to a successful harvest season. While the Mission acknowledges the efforts exerted by the Government to provide health and education services to the nomadic community and to establish local markets and veterinary offices. Speaking at the closing ceremony of the workshop, the Secretary General of central Darfur state, Al-Shartai (Native Administrative Leader) Hussein Bakhit, appreciated UNAMID’s valuable support to the local communities which led to a successful harvest season in Central Darfur. “UNAMID is our partner in peace, development and provision of basic services in Darfur and Sudan in general. Our transitional Government is focused on achievement of achieve peace in Darfur through the establishment of the local chapter of the Peace Council. I strongly urge farmers and herders to adhere to set government rules and regulations on defined migratory routes to avoid conflict. All participants must take on the responsibility to disseminate the knowledge acquired during this workshop to local communities in all localities of Central Darfur,” Mr. Bakhit added.

Representing participants, Dr. Zainelabdeen Adam, underlined the importance of organizing such workshops for the youth from the farmers and herders’ communities, noting that youth are sometimes the main drivers of conflict between the communities. He further recommended the conduct of an awareness campaign for the youth to help fight drugs and address anger issues that ignite some of these conflicts. “I also welcome the participation of women in the workshop as women play a very important role in achieving social peace in affected communities,” Mr. Adam added.

Dr. El Nour Musa Bahareldeen, from the Peace and Development Institution at Zalingei University, emphasized the importance of the workshop in achieving peaceful co-existence between the farmers and nomads and called on UNAMID to organize similar workshops in the various localities, especially in the critical areas of Zalingei and Nertiti localities, central Darfur.
UNAMID Tanzanian peacekeepers conduct training on cement brick making for IDPs in South Darfur

From 7 to 22 January, more than 140 residents, mostly youth from the Khor Abeche Camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in south Darfur, participated in a UNAMID supported training project on the molding of bricks using sand and cement. This capacity building project, implemented by UNAMID Tanzanian (TANZBATT) peacekeepers based in Khor Abeche, was aimed at imparting masonry skills to the youth in the area who have pledged to build more durable housing for the more than 6700 Khor Abeche IDPs Camp dwellers who currently reside in temporary grass huts that fall short of providing reasonable shelter for local communities, especially during the rain and cold seasons. The project is part of TANZBATT initiatives meant to support local communities to upgrade to a more conducive lifestyle, higher house building skills and to develop additional income-generating options that will make them more independent and become a self-sustained society.

In Khor Abeche, the cement brick making training was conducted in two phases where the first 1000 bricks were used to construct an Islamic learning school and an additional 3000 bricks sold to the residents to raise capital for similar future projects.

In his remarks during the handover ceremony, Lieutenant Colonel Kayage assured the host community (Kayage), said Kayage.

“Revenue generated through the sale of the first 1000 bricks was used to construct an Islamic learning school. The cement brick making training was implemented by 50 trainees from various north Darfur localities, was aimed at enhancing the capacity of participants to raise awareness among local communities on the negative impacts of violence against women and children. Addressing participants during the closing ceremony, Ms. Ana Maria De Jesus Morais Valerio from UNAMID’s Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSS), called on the participants to transmit to others the knowledge they have gained during the training.

“We urge the cement brick making trainees and the local communities in general, to fully utilize locally available raw materials in the production of the bricks. There is enough sand here in Khor Abeche as well as water. We are providing you with bags of cement as part of the startup phase of this project, which if managed well, will improve your living conditions and prepare a better future for your children”, said Kayage.

In response, the Umda (local community leader), Hussein Abubakar, remarked that through this project they expect to construct better houses with better living conditions and for their children to be self-employed instead of them roaming around the streets engaging in less fruitful endeavors.

On 23 January, United Nations State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in North Darfur, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Development of North Darfur, concluded a three-day training programme on Gender Based Violence (GBV), and children’s law as outlined in the Sudan Child Act endorsed in 2010, convened for Government of Sudan police officers and social workers in the area.

The training programme, attended by 50 participants from various north Darfur localities, was aimed at enhancing the capacity of participants to raise awareness among local communities on the negative impacts of violence against women and children. On behalf of the participants, Mr. Khalid Musa Abdallah, appreciated efforts made by the UN SLFs and the Social Welfare Unit at the State Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Development in North Darfur, Ms. Intisar Abdel Aziz, commended the efforts made by UNAMID and UNICEF in supporting her institution in the domain of protection of children and women and for convening the training workshop.

“Lack of means of transportation for social workers is a huge challenge that hampers the quality of their work delivery, especially in the localities. We request UNAMID and UNICEF to continue to support the movement of social workers and facilitate their quick response to reported cases and emerging situations within the communities,” Ms. Aziz noted.

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18 March; In the backdrop of the outbreak of the Novel Corova Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNAMID’s Pakistani peacekeepers conducted a series of workshops on COVID-19 at the Mission’s Team Site in Kabkabiya, North Darfur. The workshops were aimed at raising awareness among UNAMID staff and the Kabkabiya local community on the importance of taking precautionary measures, such as the use of face masks, frequent hand washing, use of personal protective equipment and maintenance of good personal hygiene to control the spread of the virus, if and when it occurs in the area. Information regarding COVID-19 outbreak, mode of transmission, signs & symptoms and precautionary measures to be taken to control its spread were also distributed to participants. The participants appreciated the efforts of Pakistani Doctors to valuable knowledge the received during the workshop and expressed their readiness to share the information gained during these workshops with the staff and local community. At the end of workshops, participants were also screened for COVID-19 with infrared thermometer and were found to be negative. Similar workshops will be held in El Fasher, north Darfur before the end of January 2020 after conclusion of consultations with various stakeholders by the Joint Field Committee (JFC) comprising the National Peace Commission, the Transitional Government of Sudan and the SRF Darfur Tracks.

In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2495 (2019), which mandated UNAMID to support the peace process, the Mission is providing logistical support to the Peace Commission, Transitional Government of Sudan, and Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) Darfur Track members to enable them to travel to different Darfur states to organize two major consultative conferences for IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), native administration and civil society to facilitate their participation in peace talks currently underway in Juba, South Sudan.

Mr. Mustafa Daoud, Head of the Sudan Revolutionary Front Darfur Track team commended UNAMID for its cooperation and role in providing logistical support to the JFC. “UNAMID support enabled us to visit all IDPs camps in Darfur and conduct consultations with their leaders to engage the IDPs in the peace talks, currently underway in Juba, South Sudan”, said Mustafa. Mr. Daoud emphasized that the selection of the IDPs representatives will be conducted in a transparent manner by the IDPs themselves with the JFC having a supervisory role in the process. “I urge the IDPs to take the opportunity to reflect their views and issues during the peace talks”, added Adam.

Ms. Najat Suliman, a member of the JFC, representing the Sudan Revolutionary Front Darfur Track highlighted the important role women can play in the peace talks and commended the positive representation of women by 50 percent and the participation of disabled persons, youth and elderly persons in the two conferences. “the women participation will help in resolving the root cause of the Darfur conflict”, She said. Two hundred participants from IDPs (men and women) will participate in the IDPs consultation conference and they will in turn, nominate 50 representatives (25 men and 25 women) to represent them in the peace talks in Juba. An additional 200 participants will also participate in the native administration and civil society stakeholder’s consultation conference, including farmers and herders and they would nominate 50 representatives (25 Native Administration and 25 society stakeholders) to participate in peace talks, currently underway in Juba, South Sudan. 
Alaa Salah, a 22-year old student at International University of Khartoum’s Faculty of Engineering told a journalist during an interview, following the toppling from power of former Sudanese President, Omar Al Bashir, on 10 April 2019. The student gained world-wide media attention from a picture and video of her chanting against the former regime that went viral and has since been nicknamed the “Woman in White”, “Lady Liberty” or “Nubian Queen” of Sudan.

As an active member of the Sudanese women networks that signed the 1 January 2019 declaration on Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), Alaa later informed the United Nations Security Council in New York last October that despite constituting almost 70% of protestors, women have been “side-lined in the formal political process” of creating transitional institutions. She stated that women’s representation in the new governance structure was “far below their demand of 50% parity”.

“After decades of struggle and all that we risked to peacefully end Bashir’s dictatorship—gender inequality is not and will never be acceptable to the women and girls of Sudan. I hope it is equally unacceptable to the members of this chamber,” she said amid applause.

She also called for judicial accountability and disarmament; and for the political process to be inclusive of women, “civil society, resistance groups, ethnic and religious minorities, those who have been displaced, and people with disabilities in order to lead to sustainable peace”.

The revolution in Sudan started on 19 December, 2018 with street protests across the country mainly due to a hike in the cost of living and continued with persistent civil disobedience until 10 April 2019 when Bashir was ousted and replaced by the Transitional Military Council (TMC) that later evolved into a Transitional Government of Sudan (TGoS).

As an integral part of the Do- ha-based Sudanese Peace Process mandated under the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security; and based on the Political Declaration and the Constitutional Document upon which the TGoS was formed, UNAMID in collaboration with the Sudan’s Peace Commission convened in Nyala, South Darfur, a Women Consultative Forum from 25 to 27 last November where about 130 participants agreed to unify their position to push forward issues and Darfur women’s agenda in the peace talks in Juba.

Participants in the Forum were from all five Darfur states and Khartoum representing government institutions, political parties, academia, civil society organizations, internally displaced persons’ (IDPs), rural women, voluntary returnees, FFC, activists, nomads and movements. Their deliberations revolved around setting up an agenda (position paper) in the areas of peace and security; justice, reconciliation, compensation and reparations; as well as empowerment.

Regarding peace and security, the participants expressed concerned over the continuing spate of violence including gender based sexual violence and conflict related sexual violence that exacerbates suffering of women and children when venturing out in search of means for livelihood. On justice, reconciliation, compensation and reparations, Darfuri women were concerned with the continuation of human rights violations and the deteriorating humanitarian conditions, for mostly women and children, living under harsh conditions in the IDPs camps. Concerning empowerment, they noted that reasons behind the conflict

UNAMID Supports Darfur Women Participation in Sudanese (Juba) Peace Talks

By SAID MSONDA

Alaa Salah, a 22-year old student at International University of Khartoum’s Faculty of Engineering told a journalist during an interview, following the toppling from power of former Sudanese President, Omar Al Bashir, on 10 April 2019. The student gained world-wide media attention from a picture and video of her chanting against the former regime that went viral and has since been nicknamed the “Woman in White”, “Lady Liberty” or “Nubian Queen” of Sudan.
in Darfur and the obstacles for the achievement of peace was marginalization in power and wealth sharing, especially for women, noting that these critical issues remain unaddressed.

The Forum recommended for the TGoS to ratify all regional and international agreements on the rights of women and establishment of mechanisms for the implementation; involve Darfur women in re-

military colleges and their promo-
tion to higher ranks; reformation of security sector and enhancing the rule of law; reinforcing political will and establishment of mechani-

ses; following implementation of the Constitutional document provisions; engagement of women commission in setting up and follow the implementation of gender jus-
tice policies; presentation of racialism as one of the causes of war.

“I’m not afraid of dying .... We all have to die at some point, so it’s better to die defending the cause,” says the slim neatly dressed young woman.

viewing and updating the national plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325; integration of gender perspective in justice and military institutions and facilitation of acceptance of girls in police and

and integration of the provisions of the peace agreement in the Constitu-
tion. This Forum also request-
ed UNAMID to provide technical and logistical support for women to facilitate their contribution in all stages of the peace process and support the establishment of the provisions of the peace agreement in the constitution. They further agreed to establish a mechanism to coordinate gen-
der issues and the women agenda in the peace process; formation of data base to locate competent Darfur women in all fields and at all levels; formation of a women pressure group for advocacy for peace; establishment of a women initiative to meet with Abdul Wa-
id Nour to urge him to join the peace process and establishment of a women mechanism to liaise with armed movements to encour-
age them to unite and to foster trust between them. According to Ms. Halima Yagoub Ah-
mad Mohamad, UNAMID Gender Affairs Officer, above position was submitted to the Sovereign Coun-
cil, the Justice and Equality (Armed) Movement delegation, Sudanese Women Union and Canadian Em-
bassy to advocate for their position in the resumption of the peace pro-
cess in Juba. "The Forum also list-
ed potential women for Legislative Council and leadership positions in different government ranks and in-
stitutions,“ she added.

In response to the request from the Women’s Forum, UNAMID provided logistical support to a 16-member team Joint Field Committee (JFC), comprised of representatives from the Sudan Peace Commission and Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)-Darfur to organize two Consultative Con-
ferecnes in El Fasher: one involving IDP representatives, on 30 January 2020 and second confer-
ence comprising representatives from native administration, civil society held the following day to address issues related to gener-
al peace and security as well as to undertake consultation with stakeholders in Darfur to select their representatives to the Su-
danese Peace Talks in Juba. In addition, UNAMID conducted a workshop for women in Zalingei, Central Darfur from 9 to 11 Feb-
ruary 2020 to enable coordinators from all the Darfur states to com-
pile a framework for advocacy and lobby for inclusion of women in the peace process, participation in national politics and nomina-
tion of Darfuri women to the Leg-
islative Council and other govern-
ment positions. Workshop partic-
ipants were also informed on the process underway to establish a Darfur Women Regional Coalition, a platform for advocacy, lobby and networking at the regional and in-
ternational level.

UNAMID also provided logistical support to women IDPs, civil society and native administration represen-
tatives who participated in the Su-
danese Peace Talks in Juba, South Sudan from 5 to 8 March 2020. UNAMID will continue to play its fa-
cilitation role to ensure that Darfuri women actively participate in these peace talks to ensure that their po-
sitions on issues of serious concern to them are fully taken on board to enable people like Alaa Salah, who were part of the revolution in Dec-
ember 2018, confidently feel that “inclusion of women in the political sphere, judicial accountability and disarmament” among other issues, are finally realized in Sudan.

"Women and young people were at the forefront of the recent pro-
tests, often outnumbering men and accounting for 70 per cent of protesters while facing extraordi-

nary risks including being subject-
ed to arrest, harassment and rape. Darfuri women have continued to demonstrate their capacity and zeal to drive change towards a pos-
itive extreme of a better tomorrow and look towards a meaningful and equal participation of women in peace and political processes,“ stated George Odongo, UNAMID’s Gender Unit Officer in Charge.
Interview with UNAMID’s new Director Mission Support Division, Mr. Houston Fergusson.

In United Nations peacekeeping operations, the Mission Support Division (MSD) has, as part its numerous obligations, the responsibility to account for those assets United Nations member states have invested in during the life of the mission. In this interview with Voices of Darfur, UNAMID’s newly appointed Director of Mission Support Division, Mr. Houston Fergusson, gives an insightful look at the work of the Division.

VoD: This is your second association with UNAMID, what are your impressions of the Mission area this time around?

HF: I am very pleased to be back in the field and back to what was always my favorite Mission. There are a number of impressions that I have seen since my return to the Mission. First, I was very impressed by the infrastructure of the Mission and how it has stood the test of time and all the conditions, especially the accommodation. As I look around today it is still in pretty good shape. This is a validation of all the hard work that went into building the infrastructure. The other impression I have, is how green the place has become. I remember planting a lot of seedlings when I was here the first time. Now, the place is an oasis of lush green trees and flowers. That always makes it ecstically pleasing to the eye.

VoD: Describe the role of the Mission’s Support Division (MSD) which you lead and how its operations are aligned to other Mission components.

HF: Because of the phase of life UNAMID is in presently, the MSD has to balance and compete with a number of partners and requirements. First we have to remember that we still have a mandate that compels us to undertake a number of operational activities such as protection of civilians, support to humanitarian agencies, mediation and the political process. At the same time, I, on behalf of the organization, have to reorient the focus towards transition, pre-closure of the Mission and eventual liquidation which is very different from other missions which are not in this phase of life. We are at a certain point in mission life where we have to look at what next for UNAMID? What next for UN presence in Darfur?

There is a lot of emphasis for Mission Support Division (MSD) to be accountable for all the investments
VoD: Has the Mission intensified its engagement with local authorities to facilitate/ensure seamless shipping of UN assets given the lengthy goods clearance delays encountered at the formative stage of the Mission?

HF: One of the changes that I have seen since my recent return to Darfur is the cooperation and the willingness of [Sudan] governmental bodies that I deal with to work with the Mission. In fact, on the day of my arrival in Sudan, I paid a courtesy call on the [Sudan] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and met with Ambassador Said, who is the Director in charge of UNAMID operations in the MoFA. Since then, I have held technical meetings with the Ambassador and the various arms of Government that would allow us to operate under a freedom of movement arrangement. Those included national intelligence, customs and excise and aviation. My sense is that there is a greater sense of willingness, certainly from my counterparts, to support UNAMID. We have seen some real advances in terms of lead time, for example on the issue of visas. Sudanese visa application constraints used to be a real issue as these prevented us from doing certain operational issues that are part of freedom of movement. We have seen a lot of improvement in the speed and the manner these work visas are currently being approved. That is a very, very good sign. We have also seen increased cooperation, not because of my arrival, but have noted this cooperation from customs and excise department. My observation is that all these processes and procedures that seemed cumbersome and painful, all seem to be working better now. I would probably also add that there are positive political changes taking place in the country, including the approach by UNAMID Leadership which has always been cooperative when working with those entities. This is paying off.

VoD: Do you envision encountering any major challenges during the Mission’s imminent drawdown/closure from the MSD’s perspective and what is the UNAMID’s preparedness level to mitigate these challenges?

HF: Well the rainy season will soon be approaching. We are currently enjoying some sunshine, with no single drop of rain since my arrival in Darfur. I know that this will change soon with the onset of rains. Certainly one of the challenges of closing down team sites will be the movement of a lot of equipment across some poor road infrastructure. I firmly believe the rainy season will really test some of our logistic capabilities. The other thing we have to take into consideration is that there are some political discussions taking place about what will come next after UNAMID. MSD is planning for a number of contingencies at this time. We have to consider what elements of UNAMID structure could be utilized for UNAMID follow-on presence. In this regard, we cannot start dismantling or closing one camp where there’s likelihood that camp can be a future location for the next UN presence. We have to take into account various security factors to make an informed decisions on these operational matters. Such decisions are dictated by the security environment in the area. Mission Support Division is therefore looking at all planned contingencies. As MSD, we are supporting both political and operational drivers as our job is to explore all possible scenarios and try to place good mitigating measures. MSD planning for the rainy day and all other things in between, continues. That is the role of Mission Support Division, to plan for every eventuality.
The military-political conflict in Darfur which erupted in 2003 had impacted various spheres of life for the people of the region. Along the social fabric and the livelihoods affected by the conflict, most of the existing infrastructures and government institutions were also not spared from the negative consequences of the long conflict that had also caused massive displacement of vulnerable population, who had only camps and gathering sites as refuge, abandoning their beloved original villages and properties as well.

This situation has necessitated the international community intervention to come in to help the people of Sudan and Darfur in particular to put an end to the conflict and work towards stability and achieving lasting peace through political negotiations, hence, the coming to Darfur of AMIS troops in 2004 followed by UNMIS in 2005 and later on UNAMID in 2007.

Although a comprehensive peace agreement is not yet achieved for the people of Darfur to start having a normal life, enjoying stability and development, but what is certain is that the above regional and the UN peacekeeping missions, along UN Agencies and INGOs had made significant efforts to addressing the Darfur conflict, tackling its root causes and helping the parties to the conflict to reach a just and inclusive peace deal that will pave the way towards stability and sustainable development.

In this complex situation where- "No Comprehensive Peace Deal exists, demands for development, strengthening and reforming the existing public services and institutions remained high", UNAMID is to exit from Darfur in October 2020 as per the UN Security Council Resolution. In this critical context and to ensure a smooth transition that will prevent a relapse into conflict and disruption of the peace continuum after UNAMID eventual exit from Darfur, the concept of establishing the UN State Liaison Function (SLFs) in designated peacebuilding areas in Darfur, that include North, South, West, East and later on greater Jebel Marra emerged.

This line with the United Nations Security Council resolution 2429 (2018), which endorsed a two-pronged approach – peacekeeping in the greater Jebel Marra and peacebuilding in the rest of Darfur.

The developed and endorsed SLFs concept, directed UNAMID to work jointly with the UNCT to support a whole-of-system transition concept with the aim of providing sustainable solutions to the critical drivers of conflict in Darfur within a two-year timeframe.

Speaking about this unique approach in the UN operations worldwide, the UNAMID DJSR, Anita Kiki, in a video statement accorded to the mission’s CPIS publication unit during SLFs Staff meeting held at the mission’s logistics base in El Fasher on 23 June 2019 said “The SLFs were about the exit strategy of UNAMID, ensuring that we exit in a responsible manner, ensuring that what we have done over the years in the areas of Rule of Law, durable solutions when it comes to livelihoods, IDPs, and refugees, to ensuring that the work we have done in Human Rights is transition to our brothers and sisters in the UNCT, transition to our partners at the local level, transition ultimately to the people of Darfur and the authorities who will ensure that institutions functioned on day to day basis”. She further added “We are in the course of something new, we are in the course of something special, the way of working together as one family for the people of Darfur. The feeling was that, yes, there are problems, yes the current situation in Sudan is difficult, but what we are doing now could make the difference”.

Describing the UN New concept of SLFs, Mr. Simon Girmaw, UNHCR Protection Officer, said in a video statement accorded to the mission’s CPIS publication unit during SLFs Phase 2 meeting held at the mission’s logistics base in El Fasher: “SLFs has been a project that allows the UN to come in to help the people of Darfur and the authorities who will ensure that institutions functioned on day to day basis”. She further added “We are in the course of something new, we are in the course of something special, the way of working together as one family for the people of Darfur. The feeling was that, yes, there are problems, yes the current situation in Sudan is difficult, but what we are doing now could make the difference”.

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In fact, the SLFs have four major areas of intervention that include, Rule of law, Human rights, Durable solutions: livelihood for displaced populations; and - Durable solutions: immediate service delivery for internally displaced persons. It action plans are implemented under the programmatic lead of the UNCT in close cooperation with national actors. Further, the SLFs related projects, are financed through UNAMID assessed programmatic funding for which the mission is accountable.

The implementation of SLFs related projects and activities was divided into three phases and since the commencement of implementation of phase one of SLF from January to June 2019 and phase two from July 2019 up-to-date, several community-based projects were carried out
to foster social peace, strengthening rule of law and human rights institutions and personnel as well as reinforcing the area of livelihoods for the local population.

For instance, in North Darfur, and under SLFs phase 1, UNAMID Rule of Law in El Daein prison in an interview accorded to Oluremi Okuseinde, UNAMID Corrections Officer, Rule of Law -El Daein SLF on 19 February 2020, said “I wish to sincerely thank the UN SLFs, representing by UNAMID Rule of Law and UNDP Team in El Daein for their support and tireless efforts and the cordial working relationship that has enabled the implementation of this prison project come to reality. This will improve and strengthened the living condition of the inmates because it will provide a safe, secure and humane prison habitational environment that will enhance Reformation, Rehabilitation and Re-integration on discharge. Congestion will be a thing of the past. It is my hope that this kind of support will continue for the betterment of prison system in Darfur.”

During an interview with the judge of the juvenile court in North Darfur, Maolana Nourain Mohammed Youssif on 03 March 2020, he commended efforts of UNSLs in constructing Child Court in North Darfur. He added “Until 2018 there was no single court structure existing for children and juveniles. The child court operated in a single room within the general court inside the judiciary premises where multiple crimes of adult cases took place, and this was not conducive environment that could be child friendly. The year 2019 brought a milestone achievement through the construction of a separate structure for a child court which has turned out to be the only facility of its kind in the entire North Darfur. The project was implemented by UNICEF and UNAMID SLFs Phase 1, including rehabilitation of one major Dam in Dar Salam, enabling over 6,000 returnees, host and nomadic households to have access to water for livestock and agricultural purposes, 1000 boreholes in the same locality of Kornoi, providing easy access to water for 2,000 households.

The above achievements of UN SLFs in North Darfur, in terms of construction and infrastructure development as well as durable solutions are not limited to that region, it covered also other SLFs areas in South, and East Darfur. For example, the construction projects of Human Rights Resources Centers at Universities of Nyala and El Daein, which are ongoing, rehabilitation of Abu Karinka Veterinary Center by UNAMID GCSS and FAO, construction of Abu Karinka New prison by UNAMID Rule of Law and UNDP, which is scheduled to be handed over in January 2021, Construction of Public Prosecution Office in El Daein, by UNAMID Rule of Law and under SLFs Phase 2, and the construction of Abu Karinka district court which stands on the site that previously was a guest house for the judiciary comprises of multiple facilities including 1 court room, 7 office rooms, 1 veranda, 3 bathrooms and toilets, security guards’ room. The entire premise is protected with a perimeter wall constructed by UNICEF as a separate project together with office furniture, fans, toys and TV”. According to Maolana Nourain Mohammed Youssif, newly constructed child court facility, ensures humane, safe and secure environment which complies with international standards and best practices for the treatment of juveniles.

During same interview with the judge of the juvenile court, Nourain Mohammed Youssif, it was established that the court receives and processes 800 to 900 cases of different crimes per year including, murder, rape, theft among other crimes. The Judge requests for support in the construction of other juvenile courts in the State localities starting with Alaeit locality which has already been approved by the Judicial authorities in Khartoum, followed by Darzagwa, Kornei and Kutum as this will reduce backlog of cases in El Fasher. In terms of Durable Solutions(Livelihoods/Resilience), several related projects were implemented in North Darfur under same SLFs Phase 1, including rehabilitation of one major Dam in Dar Salam, enabling over 6,000 returnees, host and nomadic households to have access to water for livestock and agricultural purposes, 1000 IDPs and returnees households were provided with conflict-free irrigated land for cultivation in Dar Salam locality, hence, reducing conflict and building confidence. In addition to that, a livelihoods hub has been completed in Kornoi locality, serving over 2,000 households, along rehabilitation of four boreholes in the same locality of Kornoi, providing easy access to water for 2,000 households.
Kiki said during SLFs Phase 2 meetings, UNAMID DJSR, Ms. Anita Kiki in a video statement acknowledging that UNAMID has also done a lot when it comes to infrastructure development, police stations, and public prosecutions offices. In fact, the efforts of UN SLFs in the search for durable peace and development in Darfur, included also capacity building programs, which were offered to the local community across SLFs areas of responsibility. In this regard, SLFs provided significant number of trainings to Sudan prison officers, district court judges, prosecutors, Sudan Police Force, Civil Society Organizations, Community Paralegals Networks, Rural Court Judges, Native Administration, At-Risk Youth, women and youth, farmers and nomadic household. Theses capacity building programs, covered various domains, such as Training of Trainers workshops for SPF officers on Investigations of SGBV, domestic related violence and child abuse cases, Sensitization campaigns on gender based issues, community policing and child abuse to the local community, including IDPs, training workshops for SPF officers including, including Women Protection Groups on SGBV, FCP and gender mainstreaming, Training workshops on Human Rights Approach to Prison Operation for in-service GoS Prison Officers, training workshops for paralegals, on Access to Justice and Rule of Law, Training workshops on Prison duties and managements for newly recruited Prison officers, training workshops on Gender Based Violence (GBV), and children’s law as outlined in the Sudan Child Act endorsed in 2010 for Government of Sudan police officers and social workers, training workshops on human rights for rural courts judges and native administration and training workshops on “Legal Aid and Human Rights”.

Lauding the capacity building trainings provided by UN SLFs to GoS Police Officers in North Darfur, Brig. Gen. Abdul Illah Ali Mohamed, while addressing the opening ceremony on behalf of North Darfur Police Commissioner, for the launch of a five-day training workshop on the management of Family and Child Protection Unit (FCPU) desks and Gender Sensitive Approach to policing, human rights, sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) and standard operating procedures, held on 12 November 2019 for Government of Sudan (GoS) female police officers in El Fasher, North Darfur said: “We were able to benefit from several capacity building programs through the good partnership with UNAMID and UNICEF, the support which helped our officers to improve the quality of services they deliver to the citizens”.

With no doubt, this support of infrastructure development and capacity building provided by UN SLFs to the people of Darfur during the past period had contributed immensely to the peacebuilding process as the efforts were highly appreciated by the beneficiaries and the community as whole. Certainly, all the SLFs desired goals, in terms of boosting infrastructure development and livelihoods in Darfur regions cannot be achieved during the remaining period for the life span of UNAMID in Darfur, simply because the development is a process, which needs more time to be realized, but what is important here is planting the seeds for development which SLFs does. “Development is not something we do in a year, is not which is done in five years, or something that stands in ten years, is something that is going to be long-term, but we felt through this integrated approach, working together as one UN Family, we are planting the seeds, we will not be around to see them really germinate, but we are sure that working together, we are going to make difference for the people of Darfur”. Said UNAMID DJSR, Ms. Anita Kiki in a video statement accor-ded to the mission’s CPIS publication unit during SLFs Staff meeting held at the Mission’s logistics base in El Fasher on 23 June 2019.

Assuring the people of Darfur that durable peace and development efforts will continue if UNAMID exit the region, the UNFPA representa-tive in Sudan, Mr. Massimo Diana during a joint visit to El Geneina with UNAMID DJSR on 21 October 2019, said “UNAMID maybe leaving, but UN is here to stay, so we are here to see how best we can complement, and ensure there is a responsible engagement on the part of UN from proceeding to long-term peace and sustainable development.”

Certainly, all the SLFs related projects and activities is done through several AFPs, with which UNAMID has signed mem-oranda of understanding. These include, FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO, IWPG, and UN Women. Several UNAMID staff, civilians and police officers are co-located within these AFPs in the four states of Darfur (North, South, East and West) and are operating within the SLF framework and concept.
In accordance with its core mandate of protection of civilians, UNAMID provides daily patrols to assess the situation in the internally displaced camps and villages in its area of responsibility in the Darfur region. Through these short, medium and long range patrols, UNAMID peacekeepers engage the host community as part of the Mission’s confidence building measures. Some of the patrols are undertaken specifically to provide support, especially to women and girls, during their farming, fire wood and water fetching activities. In addition, UNAMID peacekeepers use these patrols to document security incidents such as fire, criminal acts, gender-based violence, and presence of unexploded ordnance and to mobilize responses to community concerns.

UNAMID Patrols – Building Trust within host communities in Darfur

UNAMID peacekeepers interact with local community members during a routine patrol in Siri Sam village, near the Mission’s Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in Golo, Central Darfur. As part of its core mandate to protect civilians, the Mission conducts daily patrols in various internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and villages in its area of responsibility. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.
UNAMID integrated team from Golo temporary operating base (TOB) conducted an assessment visit to Manabu area—an area controlled by SLA/AW, Omer Aljazouli faction, approximately 14 kilometers east from Golo TOB, during the first visit ever, UNAMID team met with the armed movement leaders and discussed issues related to protection of civilians, human rights and humanitarian assistance. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.
Painting for peace and love for fine art: An interview with Artist Elfadil Abdulrahman:

Thirty-six year old Elfadil Abdurahman, was born in Jebel Marra area in Darfur, Sudan where he started his basic education before moving to Nyala, south Darfur where he undertook his secondary education, ending up in Zalingei University, and central Darfur where he graduated with a degree in Geography. Elfadil currently works as a secondary school teacher in his beloved hometown of Golo in central Darfur.

Elfadil: Fine art for me started as a hobby. The real motivation for my love of fine art is my upbringing. I was born in Golo, in the Jebel Marra area of central Darfur where I was surrounded by green pastures, a mountainous environment and amazing waterfalls. I felt the urge to capture this scenery in painting for posterity. My family also encouraged me to follow my passion as an addition to my regular academic studies.

VoD: How did you get involved with fine art?

Elfadil: Because of the rich natural views in Jebel Marra, I always find myself drawn to drawing and painting natural elements such as waterfalls, rivers, mountains and green landscapes. This overwhelming natural beauty not only inspires fine artists, but poets, singers and praise singers.

VoD: What is the general focus for your paintings?

Elfadil: Since my drawings reflect the serene beauty of the Jebel Marra – the most beautiful area in Sudan in my eyes – my paintings have now become an attraction for tourism purposes in my area and is well known by media outlets in my area. You know that Golo, especially the parts with the waterfalls and the like, is not yet easily accessible due to poor road infrastructure. Therefore displaying my painting and displaying them at exhibitions, promotes the tourism potential of my area, goes a long way in attracting visitors to at least make their way to Golo to discover the scenic, undiscovered greenery and waterfalls.

I mostly use the green, blue and gray colors I mostly use in my paintings as these are “optimistically...
calm” colors that appropriately describes our landscape, our people and the joy that awaits those who visit our communities.

VoD: Do you feel that your paintings contribute to peace in your home area that has seen its fair share of conflict in Darfur?

Elfadil: All my paintings send a strong message to the Darfur community to come together, live peacefully in a solid harmony. This message could be captured in murals in public areas, streets and even in schools where the message encourages unity and love among the various communities. Peace is our strategic objective. We need to highlight the fact that Jebel Marra is very rich in its delightful, natural views and landscapes, waterfalls and wonderful tropical weather.

VoD: What are your future plans in fine art?

Elfadil: To be honest, I have many plans in mind! Developing my hobby in fine art through incorporating modern technology and painting tools as well as conducting photo exhibitions that showcase nature and life in Darfur in general and Jebel Marra area in particular. These are my priorities. We need to promote peace and peaceful coexistence in Darfur.

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VoD: What challenges are you facing as a fine artist in central Darfur?

Elfadil: Lack of materials, equipment and marketing of our products are the main challenges we face in our area. However, a noticeable lack of the general population’s awareness of the value of fine art is truly worrisome and has caused stagnation in the market for our paintings. In addition, poor road, housing and office infrastructure has hindered movement and advancement of the fine art trade, visits of artists to the area and limited fair competition in field of fine art.

VoD: Do you have any changes you would like to see effected to improve the situation you’re just described?

Elfadil: I appeal to all fellow artists to direct all their artistic efforts toward peace building among Darfur communities. Art can play an essential role in restoring coexistence in Darfur. I look forward to a secure, stable, developed and prosperous Sudan, including our beloved region Darfur not forgetting my beautiful, luscious green Jebel Marra.